



Central Asia: Regional Developments and Implications for U.S. Interests

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Summary

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the United States recognized the independence of all the former Central Asian republics, supported their admission into Western organizations, and elicited regional support to counter Iranian influence in the region. Congress was at the forefront in urging the formation of coherent U.S. policies for aiding these and other Eurasian states of the former Soviet Union.

Soon after the terrorist attacks on America on September 11, 2001, all the Central Asian states offered overflight and other support for coalition anti-terrorism efforts in Afghanistan. Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan hosted coalition troops and provided access to airbases. In 2003, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan also endorsed coalition military action in Iraq. About two dozen Kazakhstani troops served in Iraq until late 2008. Uzbekistan rescinded U.S. basing rights in 2005 after the United States criticized the reported killing of civilians in the town of Andijon. Kyrgyzstan rescinded U.S. basing rights in 2009, allegedly because of Russian inducements and U.S. reluctance to meet Kyrgyz requests for greatly increased lease payments. U.S. policy has emphasized bolstering the security of the Central Asian “front-line” states to help them combat terrorism, proliferation, and arms and drug trafficking. Other U.S. objectives have included promoting free markets, democratization, human rights, energy development, and the forging of east-west and Central Asia-South Asia trade links. Such policies aim to help the states become what various U.S. Administrations have considered to be responsible members of the international community rather than to degenerate into xenophobic, extremist, and anti-Western regimes that threaten international peace and stability.

Policymakers have tailored U.S. policy in Central Asia to the varying characteristics of these states. U.S. interests in Kazakhstan have included securing and eliminating Soviet-era nuclear and biological weapons materials and facilities. U.S. energy firms have invested in oil and natural gas development in Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, and successive Administrations have backed diverse export routes to the West for these resources. Economic and democratic reforms have been among U.S. concerns in Kyrgyzstan. In Tajikistan, U.S. aid has focused on economic reconstruction following that country’s 1992-1997 civil war. U.S. relations with Uzbekistan suffered following the Uzbek government’s violent crackdown on armed and unarmed protesters in the city of Andijon in May 2005.

The 111th Congress is likely to continue to be at the forefront in advocating increased U.S. ties with Central Asia, and in providing backing for the region for the transit of non-lethal equipment and supplies for U.S.-led stabilization efforts in Afghanistan. Congress is likely to pursue these goals through hearings and legislation on humanitarian, economic, and democratization assistance, security issues, and human rights. Ongoing congressional interests are likely to include boosting regional border and customs controls and other safeguards to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), combating trafficking in persons and drugs, supporting regional integration with South Asia and Europe, advancing energy security, and countering terrorism. Congress will continue to consider whether and how to balance these interests against its concerns about human rights abuses and lagging democratization in the regional states.

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Most Recent Developments

The U.S. Air Force reported in early April 2009 that facilities at the U.S. Manas airbase in Kyrgyzstan were being upgraded to support a surge of troops and supplies to Afghanistan.¹ Kyrgyz President Kurmanbek Bakiyev had signed legislation on February 20, 2009, to close the airbase within 180 days. Despite Bakiyev's action, U.S.-Kyrgyz negotiations on use of the airbase reportedly continue.

On the night of April 8-9, 2009, a section of a gas pipeline from Turkmenistan to Russia exploded, halting Turkmen gas shipments. Each side blames the other for the explosion.² About two weeks previously, visiting Turkmenistani President Gurbanguli Berdimuhamedow had failed to reach agreement with Russian President Dmitriy Medvedev on Moscow's financing for an east-west gas pipeline across Turkmenistan, to be linked to a proposed pipeline to Russia. Turkmenistan had then announced an international tender for the east-west pipeline to ensure "reliable and safe supplies of energy resources to world markets," and hinted that the pipeline could link to a possible trans-Caspian pipeline to Azerbaijan and European markets.

Kyrgyzstan's legislature voted in late March 2009 to hold an early presidential election on July 23, 2009. Individuals and parties have until May 18 to nominate candidates. The Central Electoral Commission will examine the credentials and filings of the nominees and will declare the list of candidates by June 17, 2009. Several opposition party leaders have stated that they will not run in what they term a hastily called election.

Historical Background

Central Asia consists of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan; it borders Russia, China, the Middle East, and South Asia. The major peoples of all but Tajikistan speak Turkic languages (the Tajiks speak an Iranian language); and most are Sunni Muslims (some Tajiks are Shia Muslims). Most are closely related historically and culturally. By the late 19th century, Russian tsars had conquered the last independent khanates and nomadic lands of Central Asia. By the early 1920s, Soviet power had been imposed; by 1936, five "Soviet Socialist Republics" had been created. Upon the collapse of the Soviet Union in December 1991, they gained independence.³

¹ U.S. Air Force. 376th Air Expeditionary Wing. Tech. Sgt. Phyllis Hanson, "BEAR Team Builds Up Manas Quarters for Transiting Forces," *Public Affairs News*, April 10, 2009.

² Open Source Center. *OSC Feature*, April 14, 2009, Doc. No. FEA-844966; *Central Eurasia: Daily Report* (hereafter *CEDR*), April 14, 2009, Doc. No. CEP-950339; *ITAR-TASS*, April 3, 2009; Sergey Blagov, "Turkmenistan: Ashgabat Wonders Whether Russia Still Has Deep Pockets," *Eurasia Insight*, March 26, 2009.

³ See CRS Report 97-1058, *Kazakhstan: Recent Developments and U.S. Interests*, by Jim Nichol; CRS Report 97-690, *Kyrgyzstan: Recent Developments and U.S. Interests*, by Jim Nichol; CRS Report 98-594, *Tajikistan: Recent Developments and U.S. Interests*, by Jim Nichol; CRS Report 97-1055, *Turkmenistan: Recent Developments and U.S. Interests*, by Jim Nichol, and CRS Report RS21238, *Uzbekistan: Recent Developments and U.S. Interests*, by Jim Nichol.

Overview of U.S. Policy Concerns

After the collapse of the Soviet Union at the end of 1991, then-President George H.W. Bush sent the “FREEDOM Support Act” (FSA) aid authorization to Congress, which was amended and signed into law in October 1992 (P.L. 102-511). In 1999, congressional concerns led to passage of the “Silk Road Strategy Act” (P.L. 106-113), which authorized enhanced policy and aid to support conflict amelioration, humanitarian needs, economic development, transport and communications, border controls, democracy, and the creation of civil societies in the South Caucasus and Central Asia.

Central Asia: Basic Facts

Total Area: 1.6 million sq. mi., larger than India; Kazakhstan: 1.1 m. sq. mi.; Kyrgyzstan: 77,000 sq. mi.; Tajikistan: 55,800 sq. mi.; Turkmenistan: 190,000 sq. mi.; Uzbekistan: 174,500 sq. mi.

Total Population: 61.36 million, slightly less than France; Kazakhstan: 15.34 m.; Kyrgyzstan: 5.36 m.; Tajikistan: 7.21 m.; Turkmenistan: 5.18 m.; Uzbekistan: 28.27 m. (July 2008 est., *The World Factbook*).

Total Gross Domestic Product: \$293.39 billion in 2007; per capita GDP is about \$4,800, but there are large income disparities and relatively large percentages of people in each country are in poverty. Kazakhstan: \$161.5 b.; Kyrgyzstan: \$10.38 b.; Tajikistan: \$11.87 b.; Turkmenistan: \$47.37 b.; Uzbekistan: \$62.27 b. (*The World Factbook*, purchasing power parity).

U.S. policymakers and others hold various views on the appropriate types and levels of U.S. involvement in the region. Some have argued that ties with “energy behemoth” Kazakhstan are crucial to U.S. interests.⁴ At least until recently, others have argued that Uzbekistan is the “linchpin” of the region (it is the most populous regional state and is centrally located, shaping the range and scope of regional cooperation) and should receive the most U.S. attention.

In general, U.S. aid and investment have been viewed as strengthening the independence of the Central Asian states and forestalling Russian, Chinese, Iranian, or other efforts to subvert them. Advocates of such ties have argued that political turmoil and the growth of terrorist enclaves in Central Asia could produce spillover effects both in nearby states, including U.S. allies and friends such as Turkey, and worldwide. They also have argued that the United States has a major interest in preventing terrorist regimes or groups from illicitly acquiring Soviet-era technology for making weapons of mass destruction (WMD). They have maintained that U.S. interests do not perfectly coincide with those of its allies and friends, that Turkey and other actors possess limited aid resources, and that the United States is in the strongest position as the sole superpower to influence democratization and respect for human rights. They have stressed that such U.S. influence will help alleviate social tensions exploited by Islamic extremist groups to gain adherents. They also have argued that for all these reasons, the United States should maintain military access to the region even when Afghanistan becomes more stable. At least some of these views seemed to be reflected in the former Bush Administration’s 2006 *National Security Strategy of the United States*, which proclaimed that “Central Asia is an enduring priority for our foreign policy.”⁵

Some views of policymakers and academics who previously objected to a more forward U.S. policy toward Central Asia appeared less salient after September 11, 2001, but aspects of these views could gain more credence if Afghanistan becomes more stable. These observers argued that

⁴ U.S. Department of State. Office of the Spokesman. *Remarks: Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice At Eurasian National University*, October 13, 2005. Perhaps indicative of the boosted emphasis on U.S. interests in Kazakhstan, former Secretary Rice argued that the country had the potential to be the “engine for growth” in Central Asia.

⁵ The White House. *National Security Strategy of the United States*, March 16, 2006, p. 40.

the United States historically had few interests in this region and that developments there remained largely marginal to U.S. interests. They discounted fears that anti-Western Islamic extremism would make enough headway to threaten secular regimes or otherwise harm U.S. interests. They also argued that the United States should not try to foster democratization among cultures they claimed are historically attuned to authoritarianism. Some observers rejected arguments that U.S. interests in anti-terrorism, non-proliferation, regional cooperation, and trade outweighed concerns over democratization and human rights, and urged reducing or cutting off most aid to repressive states. A few observers pointed to instability in the region as a reason to eschew deeper U.S. involvement such as military access that could needlessly place more U.S. personnel and citizens in danger.

Director of National Intelligence Dennis Blair warned in testimony on March 10, 2009, that growing challenges to Central Asia's stability ultimately "could threaten the security of critical U.S. and NATO lines of communication to Afghanistan through Central Asia." He stated that the "highly-personalized politics, weak institutions, and growing inequalities" in the Central Asian countries make them "ill-equipped to deal with the challenges posed by Islamic violent extremism, poor economic development, and problems associated with energy water and food distribution." Although Kazakhstan's energy revenues had made it a regional economic power, he cautioned that "any sustained decline in oil prices would affect revenues, could lead to societal discontent, and will derail the momentum for domestic reforms." Similarly, he counseled that the global economic downturn will severely affect Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, because they are "heavily depend[ent] on migrant worker remittances from both Russia and Kazakhstan for a significant portion of their gross domestic product (up to 45% in the case of Tajikistan). Tajikistan, in particular, faces increased threats to internal stability from the loss of these critical revenue streams."⁶

Post-September 11 and Afghanistan

After the terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001, the former Bush Administration stated that U.S. policy toward Central Asia focused on the promotion of security, domestic reforms, and energy development. According to then-Deputy Assistant Secretary of State B. Lynn Pascoe in testimony in June 2002, the September 11 attacks led the former Bush Administration to realize that "it was critical to the national interests of the United States that we greatly enhance our relations with the five Central Asian countries" to prevent them from becoming harbors for terrorism.⁷ After September 11, 2001, all the Central Asian states soon offered overflight and other assistance to U.S.-led anti-terrorism coalition operations in Afghanistan. The states were predisposed to welcome such operations. Tajikistan and Uzbekistan had long supported the Afghan Northern Alliance's combat against the Taliban, and all the Central Asian states feared Afghanistan as a base for terrorism, crime, and drug trafficking (even Turkmenistan, which tried to reach some accommodation with the Taliban). In 2005, however, Uzbekistan rescinded its basing agreement with the United States. Tajikistan and Uzbekistan have maintained their basing support for NATO peacekeeping operations—and Kyrgyzstan until recently for U.S. operations—in Afghanistan (see also below, "Security and Arms Control").

⁶ U.S. Senate. Committee on Armed Services. Hearing on National Security Threats. *Statement of Dennis C. Blair, Director of National Intelligence*, March 10, 2009.

⁷ U.S. Senate. Committee on Foreign Relations. Subcommittee on Central Asia and the South Caucasus. The U.S. Role in Central Asia. *Testimony of B. Lynn Pascoe, Deputy Assistant Secretary for European and Eurasian Affairs*, June 27, 2002.

In early June 2008, Kazakh foreign minister Marat Tazhin balked at a larger security role for the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in Afghanistan, stating that the OSCE should focus on reconstruction assistance. However, a session of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly held in Kazakhstan in late June-early July 2008 approved a resolution calling on members “to strengthen their contributions, military and humanitarian, to Afghanistan’s security and stability,” as well as assisting in its reconstruction. At the session, the speaker of Kazakhstan’s Senate (upper legislative body), Qasymzhomart Toqaev, reportedly stated that the OSCE should focus on security issues rather than on human rights and election monitoring.

Support for Operation Iraqi Freedom

Uzbekistan was the only Central Asian state that joined the “coalition of the willing” in February-March 2003 that endorsed prospective U.S.-led coalition military operations in Iraq (Kazakhstan joined later). Uzbekistan subsequently decided not to send troops to Iraq, but Kazakhstan deployed some two dozen troops to Iraq who reportedly did not take part in combat operations. They pulled out in late 2008.

Fostering Pro-Western Orientations

The United States has encouraged the Central Asian states to become responsible members of the international community, supporting integrative goals through bilateral aid and through coordination with other aid donors. The stated policy goal is to discourage radical anti-democratic regimes and terrorist groups from gaining influence. All the Central Asian leaders publicly embrace Islam but display hostility toward Islamic fundamentalism. At the same time, they have established some trade and aid ties with Iran. Although they have had greater success in attracting development aid from the West than from the East, some observers argue that, in the longer run, their foreign policies may not be anti-Western but may more closely reflect some concerns of other Islamic states. Some Western organizational ties with the region have suffered in recent years, in particular those of the OSCE, which has been criticized by some Central Asian governments for advocating democratization and respect for human rights.⁸ Despite this criticism, President Nazarbayev successfully pushed for Kazakhstan to hold the presidency of the OSCE (see below).

The State Department in 2006 included Central Asia in a revamped Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs. According to former Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Steven Mann, “institutions such as NATO and the OSCE will continue to draw the nations of Central Asia closer to Europe and the United States,” but the United States also will encourage the states to develop “new ties and synergies with nations to the south,” such as Afghanistan, India, and Pakistan.⁹ Then-Secretary Rice emphasized these ties when she heralded Kazakhstan’s role as part of “a new Silk Road, a great corridor of reform linking the provinces of northern Russia to the ports of

⁸ See also CRS Report RL30294, *Central Asia’s Security: Issues and Implications for U.S. Interests*, by Jim Nichol.

⁹ U.S. House of Representatives. Committee on International Relations. Subcommittee on the Middle East and Central Asia. Assessing Energy and Security Issues in Central Asia. *Testimony of Steven Mann, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asian Affairs*, July 25, 2006. The State Department appointed a Senior Advisor on Regional Integration in the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, Robert Deutsch, who focused on bolstering trade and transport ties between South and Central Asia.

South Asia, the republics of Western Europe to the democracies of East Asia.”¹⁰ In May 2007, Defense Secretary Robert Gates urged Asian countries to provide Central Asia with road and rail, telecommunications, and electricity generation and distribution aid to link the region with Asia; to help it combat terrorism and narcotics trafficking; to send technical advisors to ministries to promote political and economic reforms; to offer more military trainers, peacekeepers, and advisors for defense reforms; and to more actively integrate the regional states into “the Asian security structure.”¹¹ (See also below, “Trade and Investment.”)

The European Union (EU) has become more interested in Central Asia in recent years as the region has become more of a security threat as an originator and transit zone for drugs, weapons of mass destruction, refugees, and persons smuggled for prostitution or labor. Russia’s cutoff of gas supplies to Ukraine in early 2006 also bolstered EU interest in Central Asia as an alternative supplier of oil and gas. Such interests contributed to the launch of a Strategy Paper for assistance for 2002-2006 and a follow-on for 2007-2013 (see below), and the EU’s appointment of a Special Representative to the region. The EU has implemented Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (PCAs, which set forth political, economic, and trade relations) with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan. An existing Interstate Oil and Gas Transport to Europe (INOGATE) program was supplemented in 2004 and 2006 by a Baku Energy Initiative to diversify energy supplies. One project involves the proposed Nabucco pipeline, which could transport Caspian region gas to Austria.¹²

In June 2007, the EU approved a new “Central Asian strategy” for enhanced aid and relations for 2007-2013. It calls for establishing offices in each regional state and assistance of \$1 billion over the next five years. The strategy argues that the EU ties with the region need to be enhanced because EU enlargement and EU relations with the South Caucasus and Black Sea states bring it to Central Asia’s borders. The strategy also stresses that “the dependency of the EU on external energy sources and the need for a diversified energy supply policy in order to increase energy security open further perspectives for cooperation between the EU and Central Asia,” and that the “EU will conduct an enhanced regular energy dialogue” with the states.¹³ An EU-Central Asia Forum on Security Issues was held in Paris on September 18, 2008, to discuss cooperation to counter trafficking in arms, narcotics, persons, and weapons of mass destruction; to combat terrorism and extremism; and to develop energy and protect the environment. Follow-on meetings took place in late 2008 in Dushanbe on border protection, in Brussels on combating drug trafficking, in Baku on the Baku Energy Initiative, and in Ashkhabad on water resources.¹⁴ Most recently, a conference to sum up the results of an INOGATE program to assist regional

¹⁰ *Remarks at Eurasian National University*, October 13, 2005. Some observers in Russia maintain that the State Department encouraged ties between South and Central Asia in an effort to reduce Russia’s influence in Central Asia. *CEDR*, January 23, 2007, Doc. No. CEP-436006.

¹¹ U.S. Department of Defense. Department of Defense Documents. International Institute for Strategic Studies - Remarks as Delivered by Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates, Singapore, June 1, 2007.

¹² For details, see CRS Report RL33636, *The European Union’s Energy Security Challenges*, by Paul Belkin. See also European Union. “The EU and the Countries of the Black Sea and Caspian Sea Regions Agree on a Common Energy Strategy,” *Press Release*, November 30, 2006.

¹³ European Commission. *Regional Strategy Paper for Assistance to Central Asia for the Period 2007-2013*, June 2007; Council of the European Union. *Presidency Conclusions*, 11177/07, June 23, 2007, p. 12; European Commission. External Relations. *Joint Progress Report by the Council and the European Commission to the European Council on the implementation of the EU Central Asia Strategy*, June 24, 2008.

¹⁴ “Paris: Security Talks with Central Asia,” Paris Intelligence Online, September 25, 2008; European Union. Joint Declaration of the Participants in the EU-Central Asia Forum on Security Issues in Paris, September 18, 2008.

governments in drawing up national energy policies took place in early April 2009 in Almaty, Kazakhstan.

Russia's Role

During most of the 1990s, successive U.S. administrations generally viewed a democratizing Russia as serving as a role model in Central Asia. Despite growing authoritarian tendencies in Russia during the presidency of Vladimir Putin (2000-2008), the former Bush Administration emphasized that Russia's counter-terrorism efforts in the region broadly supported U.S. interests. At the same time, successive administrations have stressed to Russia that it should not seek to dominate the region or exclude Western and other involvement. Virtually all U.S. analysts agree that Russia's actions should be monitored to ensure that the independence of the Central Asian states is not threatened.

Soon after the terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001, Russia acquiesced to increased U.S. and coalition presence in the region for operations against Al Qaeda and its supporters in Afghanistan. Besides Russia's own concerns about Islamic extremism in Afghanistan and Central Asia, it was interested in boosting its economic and other ties to the West and regaining some influence in Afghanistan. More recently, however, Russia has appeared to step up efforts to counter U.S. influence in Central Asia by advocating that the states increase economic and strategic ties with Russia and limit such ties with the United States. Such a stance appears paradoxical to some observers, since Russia (and China) benefit from anti-terrorism operations carried out by U.S. (and NATO) forces in Afghanistan.

During the 1990s, Russia's economic decline and demands by Central Asia caused it to reduce its security presence, a trend that Vladimir Putin appeared determined to reverse during his presidency (2000-2008). In 1999, Russian border guards were largely phased out in Kyrgyzstan, the last Russian military advisors left Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan withdrew from the Collective Security Treaty (CST; see below) of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), in part because the treaty members failed to help Uzbekistan meet the growing Taliban threat in Afghanistan, according to Uzbek President Islam Karimov. However, Russia has appeared determined to maintain a military presence in Tajikistan. It long retained about 14,500 Federal Border Guards in Tajikistan, most of whom were Tajik conscripts, and 7,800 Russian troops of the 201st motorized rifle division.¹⁵

Russia's efforts to formalize a basing agreement with Tajikistan dragged on for years, as Tajikistan endeavored to maximize rents and assert its sovereignty. In October 2004, the basing agreement was signed, formalizing Russia's largest military presence abroad, besides its Black Sea Fleet. At the same time, Tajikistan demanded full control over border policing. Russia announced in June 2005 that it had handed over the last guard-house along the Afghan-Tajik border to Tajik troops. Reportedly, some Russian "advisory" border troops remain. Tajik President Emomali Rahmon (or Rakhmonov) and others emphasize that growing drug production and trafficking from Afghanistan pose increasing challenges.¹⁶

¹⁵ *The Military Balance 2005-2006*. London: International Institute of Strategic Studies, 2005.

¹⁶ U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). *Afghanistan Opium Survey 2008*, August 2008. UNODC stated that opium production declined slightly in 2008 after setting a record in 2007, but that Afghanistan remained the source of most of the world's opiates. UNODC estimated that about one-fifth of Afghan-produced morphine and heroin transit Central Asia. Only a tiny percentage of Afghan drugs reaches U.S. consumers, and most does not appear to be (continued...)

In a seeming shift toward a more activist role in Central Asia, in April 2000, Russia called for the members of the CST to approve the creation of rapid reaction forces to combat terrorism and hinted that such forces might launch pre-emptive strikes on Afghan terrorist bases. These hints elicited U.S. calls for Russia to exercise restraint and consult the U.N. Presidents Clinton and Putin agreed in 2000 to set up a working group to examine Afghan-related terrorism (this working group now examines global terrorism issues). CST members agreed in 2001 to set up the Central Asian rapid reaction force headquartered in Kyrgyzstan, with Russia's troops in Tajikistan comprising most of the force. CIS members in 2001 also approved setting up an Anti-Terrorism Center (ATC) in Moscow, with a branch in Kyrgyzstan, giving Russia influence over regional intelligence gathering.

Perhaps to counteract the U.S.-led military coalition presence in Kyrgyzstan established after the September 11, 2001, attacks (see below), Russia in September 2003 signed a 15-year military basing accord with Kyrgyzstan providing access to the Kant airfield, near Kyrgyzstan's capital of Bishkek. More than two dozen Russian aircraft and several hundred troops at the base also serve as part of the Central Asian rapid reaction force. The base is a few miles from the U.S.-led coalition's airbase. Besides its military presence in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, Russia has also asserted its maritime dominance in the Caspian Sea. Russia's Caspian Sea Flotilla has been bolstered by troops and equipment.

Taking advantage of Uzbekistan's souring relations with many Western countries (see below), Russia signed a Treaty on Allied Relations with Uzbekistan in November 2005 that calls for mutual defense consultations in the event of a threat to either party (similar to language in the CST). Uzbekistan re-joined the CST in June 2006, consolidating its strategic security ties with Russia. The member-states of the CST agreed in June 2006 that basing agreements by any member with a third party had to be approved by all members, in effect providing supreme veto power to Russia over future basing arrangements.

Pointing to the deterioration of U.S.-Uzbek ties, many observers suggest that the appreciative attitude of Central Asian states toward the United States—for their added security accomplished through U.S.-led actions in Afghanistan—has declined over time. Reasons may include perceptions that the United States has not provided adequate security or economic assistance. Also, Russia and China are pledging security support to the states to get them to forget their pre-September 11, 2001, dissatisfaction with Russian and Chinese efforts. Russia also encourages the leaders to believe that the United States backs democratic “revolutions” to replace them. Lastly, the security situation in Afghanistan has seemingly deteriorated in recent months.

Russia's economic interests in Central Asia are being reasserted as its economy improves and may constitute its most effective lever of influence. Russia seeks to counter Western business and gain substantial influence over energy resources through participation in joint ventures and by insisting that pipelines cross Russian territory. After an Energy Cooperation Statement was signed at the May 2002 U.S.-Russia summit, it appeared that Russia would accept a Western role in the Caspian region, including the construction of oil and gas pipelines from Azerbaijan to Turkey. Subsequently, however, Russian officials urged the Central Asian states to rely on Russian-controlled export routes (see below, “Energy Resources”). A U.S.-Russia Strategic Framework Declaration signed by then-President Bush and then-President Putin in Sochi, Russia, in April

(...continued)

smuggled through Central Asia.

2008 called for the U.S.-Russia Working Group on Energy to discuss cooperation “to enhance energy security and diversity of energy supplies through economically viable routes and means of transport.”¹⁷

Obstacles to Peace and Independence: Regional Tensions and Conflicts

The legacies of co-mingled ethnic groups, convoluted borders, and emerging national identities pose challenges to stability in all the Central Asian states. Emerging national identities accentuate clan, family, regional, and Islamic self-identifications. Central Asia’s convoluted borders fail to accurately reflect ethnic distributions and are hard to police, hence contributing to regional tensions. Ethnic Uzbeks make up sizeable minorities in the other Central Asian countries and Afghanistan. In Tajikistan, they make up almost a quarter of the population. More ethnic Turkmen reside in Iran and Afghanistan—over three million—than in Turkmenistan. Sizeable numbers of ethnic Tajiks reside in Uzbekistan, and seven million in Afghanistan. Many Kyrgyz and Tajiks live in China’s Xinjiang province. The fertile Ferghana Valley is shared by Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan. The central governments have struggled to gain control over administrative subunits. Most observers agree that the term “Central Asia” currently denotes a geographic area more than a region of shared identities and aspirations, although it is clear that the land-locked, poverty-stricken, and sparsely-populated region will need more integration in order to develop.

Regional cooperation remains stymied by tensions among the states. Such tensions continue to exist despite the membership of the states in various cooperation groups such as the CST Organization, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), and NATO’s Partnership for Peace (PFP). The CST was signed by Russia, Belarus, the South Caucasus countries, and the Central Asian states (except Turkmenistan) in May 1992 and called for military cooperation and joint consultations in the event of security threats to any member. At the time to renew the treaty in 1999, Uzbekistan, Georgia, and Azerbaijan formally withdrew. The remaining members formed the CST Organization (CSTO) in late 2002, and a secretariat opened in Moscow at the beginning of 2004. Through the CSTO, Russia has attempted to involve the members in joint support for the Central Asian rapid reaction forces and joint efforts to combat international terrorism and drug trafficking.¹⁸ Former Kyrgyz President Akayev apparently did not call for the aid of the CSTO during the coup that overthrew him in 2005 (see below), and the CSTO has appeared inactive during other crises in the region. In September 2008, its members agreed to condemn Georgia’s “aggression” against its breakaway South Ossetia region but refused a request by Russia to extend diplomatic recognition to South Ossetia and Georgia’s breakaway region of Abkhazia.

In 1996, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan signed the “Shanghai treaty” with China pledging the sanctity and substantial demilitarization of mutual borders, and in 1997 they signed a follow-on treaty demilitarizing the 4,300 mile former Soviet-Chinese border. China has used the treaty to pressure the Central Asian states to deter their ethnic Uighur minorities from supporting separatism in China’s Xinjiang province, and to get them to extradite Uighurs fleeing China. In 2001, Uzbekistan joined the group, re-named the SCO, and in 2003 the SCO Regional Anti-

¹⁷ The White House. Office of the Press Secretary. *US-Russia Strategic Framework Declaration*, April 6, 2008.

¹⁸ Roger McDermott, *Eurasia Insight*, August 28, 2002.

Terrorism Structure (RATS) was set up there. Military exercises have become a major form of cooperation. According to some observers, a major aim of these “anti-terrorism” exercises is to convince the Central Asian states that Russia and China are able to supplant the United States in helping the region to combat terrorism. China also has stressed economic cooperation with the region to build east-west transport routes, and these efforts may mark some significant progress toward regional integration.¹⁹

The 1992-1997 Civil War in Tajikistan

Tajikistan was among the Central Asian republics least prepared and inclined toward independence when the Soviet Union broke up. In September 1992, a loose coalition of nationalist, Islamic, and democratic parties and groups tried to take power. Kulyabi and Khojenti regional elites, assisted by Uzbekistan and Russia, launched a successful counteroffensive that by the end of 1992 had resulted in 20,000-40,000 casualties and up to 800,000 refugees or displaced persons, about 80,000 of whom fled to Afghanistan. After the two sides agreed to a cease-fire, the U.N. Security Council established a small U.N. Mission of Observers in Tajikistan (UNMOT) in December 1994. In June 1997, Tajik President Rahmon and the late rebel leader Seyed Abdullo Nuri signed a *comprehensive peace agreement*. Benchmarks of the peace process were largely met, and UNMOT pulled out in May 2000. To encourage the peace process, the United States initially pledged to help Tajikistan rebuild. Some observers point to events in the city of Andijon in Uzbekistan (see below) as indicating that conflicts similar to the Tajik civil war could engulf other regional states where large numbers of people are disenfranchised and poverty-stricken.

The Incursions into Kyrgyzstan

Several hundred Islamic extremists and others first invaded Kyrgyzstan in July-August 1999. Jama Namanganiy, the co-leader of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU; see below), headed the largest guerrilla group. They seized hostages and several villages, allegedly seeking to create an Islamic state in south Kyrgyzstan as a springboard for a jihad in Uzbekistan.²⁰ With Uzbek and Kazakh air and other support, Kyrgyz forces forced the guerrillas out in October 1999. Dozens of IMU and other insurgents again invaded Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan in August 2000. Uzbekistan provided air and other support, but Kyrgyz forces were largely responsible for defeating the insurgents by late October 2000. The IMU did not invade the region in the summer before September 11, 2001, in part because bin Laden had secured its aid for a Taliban offensive against the Afghan Northern Alliance.

About a dozen alleged IMU members invaded from Tajikistan in May 2006 but soon were defeated (some escaped). After this, the Kyrgyz defense minister claimed that the IMU, HT, and other such groups increasingly menaced national security.

¹⁹ Roger McDermott, *The Rising Dragon: SCO Peace Mission 2007*, Occasional Paper, The Jamestown Foundation, October 2007; S. Frederick Starr, ed., *The New Silk Roads: Transport and Trade in Greater Central Asia* (Washington D.C.: Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, 2007).

²⁰ According to Zeyno Baran, S. Frederick Starr, and Svante Cornell, the incursions of the IMU into Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan in 1999 and 2000 were largely driven by efforts to secure drug trafficking routes. *Islamic Radicalism in Central Asia and the Caucasus: Implications for the EU*, Silk Road Paper, July 2006.

The 1999 and 2004 Attacks in Uzbekistan

A series of explosions in Tashkent in February 1999 were among early signs that the Uzbek government was vulnerable to terrorism. By various reports, the explosions killed 16 to 28 and wounded 100 to 351 people. The aftermath involved wide-scale arrests of political dissidents and others deemed by some observers as unlikely conspirators. Karimov in April 1999 accused Mohammad Solikh (former Uzbek presidential candidate and head of the banned Erk Party) of masterminding what he termed an assassination plot, along with Tohir Yuldashev (co-leader of the IMU) and the Taliban. The first trial of 22 suspects in June resulted in six receiving death sentences. The suspects said in court that they received terrorist training in Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Pakistan, and Russia and were led by Solikh, Yuldashev and Namanganiy. In 2000, Yuldashev and Namanganiy received death sentences in absentia, and Solikh received a 15.5 year prison sentence. Solikh denied membership in IMU, and he and Yuldashev denied involvement in the bombings.

On March 28 through April 1, 2004, a series of suicide bombings and other attacks were launched in Uzbekistan, reportedly killing 47. An obscure Islamic Jihad Group of Uzbekistan (IJG; Jama'at al-Jihad al-Islami, a breakaway part of the IMU) claimed responsibility.²¹ In subsequent trials, the alleged attackers were accused of being members of IJG or of Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT; an Islamic fundamentalist movement ostensibly pledged to peace but banned in Uzbekistan) and of attempting to overthrow the government. Some defendants testified that they were trained by Arabs and others at camps in Kazakhstan and Pakistan. They testified that IMU member Najmiddin Kamolitdinovich Jalolov (convicted in absentia in 2000) was the leader of IJG, and linked him to Taliban head Mohammad Omar, Uighur extremist Abu Mohammad, and Osama bin Laden. On July 30, 2004, explosions occurred at the U.S. and Israeli embassies and the Uzbek Prosecutor-General's Office in Tashkent. The IMU and IJG claimed responsibility and stated that the suicide bombings were aimed against Uzbek and other "apostate" governments. A Kazakh security official in late 2004 announced the apprehension of several IJG members. He alleged that the IJG had ties to Al Qaeda; had other cells in Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Russia; and was planning assassinations.²²

The 2005 Violence in Andijon, Uzbekistan

Dozens or perhaps hundreds of civilians were killed or wounded on May 13, 2005, after Uzbek troops fired on demonstrators in the eastern town of Andijon. The protestors had gathered to demand the end of a trial of local businessmen charged with belonging to an Islamic terrorist group. The night before, a group stormed a prison where those on trial were held and released hundreds of inmates.²³ Many freed inmates then joined others in storming government buildings. President Karimov flew to the city to direct operations, and reportedly had restored order by late

²¹ The IJG changed its name to the Islamic Jihad Union (IJU) in 2005.

²² See also CRS Report RS21818, *The 2004 Attacks in Uzbekistan: Context and Implications for U.S. Interests*, by Jim Nichol.

²³ There is a great deal of controversy about whether this group contained foreign-trained terrorists or was composed mainly of the friends and families of the accused. See U.S. Congress. Commission on Security and Cooperation In Europe. Briefing: The Uzbekistan Crisis. *Testimony of Galima Bukharbayeva, Correspondent. Institute for War and Peace Reporting*, June 29, 2005. For a contrasting assessment, see Shirin Akiner, *Violence in Andijon, 13 May 2005: An Independent Assessment*, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, July 2005; and AbduMannob Polat, *Reassessing Andijan: The Road to Restoring U.S.-Uzbek Relations*, Jamestown Foundation, June 2007.

on May 13.²⁴ On July 29, 439 people who had fled from Uzbekistan to Kyrgyzstan were airlifted to Romania for resettlement processing, after the United States and others raised concerns that they might be tortured if returned to Uzbekistan.²⁵

The United States and others in the international community repeatedly called for an international inquiry into events in Andijon, which the Uzbek government rejected as violating its sovereignty. In November 2005, the EU Council approved a visa ban on twelve Uzbek officials it stated were “directly responsible for the indiscriminate and disproportionate use of force in Andijon and for the obstruction of an independent inquiry.” The Council also embargoed exports of “arms, military equipment, and other equipment that might be used for internal repression.”²⁶ The EU Council in November 2006 permitted some bilateral consultations to help Uzbekistan comply “with the principles of respect for human rights, the rule of law, and fundamental freedoms.” In October 2007 and April 2008, the EU Council suspended the visa ban for six months but left the arms embargo in place. In October 2008, the EU Council praised what it viewed as some positive trends in human rights in Uzbekistan and lifted the visa ban, although it left the arms embargo in place.²⁷

At the first major trial of fifteen alleged perpetrators of the Andijon unrest in late 2005, the accused all confessed and asked for death penalties. They testified that they were members of Akramiya, a branch of HT launched in 1994 by Akram Yuldashev that aimed to use force to create a caliphate in the area of the Fergana Valley located in Uzbekistan. Besides receiving assistance from HT, Akramiya was alleged to receive financial aid and arms training from the IMU. The defendants also claimed that the U.S. and Kyrgyz governments helped finance and support their effort to overthrow the government, and that international media colluded with local human rights groups and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in this effort. The U.S. and Kyrgyz governments denied involvement, and many observers criticized the trial as appearing stage-managed. Reportedly, 100 or more individuals have been arrested and sentenced, including some Uzbek opposition party members and media and NGO representatives. Partly in response, Congress has amplified calls for conditioning aid to Uzbekistan on its democracy and human rights record.²⁸

²⁴ Analyst Adeeb Khalid draws a parallel between the Uzbek government’s actions at Andijon and at a large student demonstration in Tashkent in January 1992. In the latter case, Karimov allegedly ordered troops to fire on the marchers, resulting in up to six deaths and two dozen or more injuries. *Islam After Communism* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007), p. 155. See also Reuters, January 17, 1992.

²⁵ See also CRS Report RS22161, *Unrest in Andijon, Uzbekistan: Context and Implications*, by Jim Nichol.

²⁶ Council of the European Union. *Uzbekistan: Council Adopts Restrictive Measures*, Press Release 14392/05, November 14, 2005. U.S. officials argued that the United States already had been limiting military assistance—at congressional request—because of human rights abuses.

²⁷ Council of the European Union. 2824th General Affairs Council Meeting. *Press Release*, October 15-16, 2007; 2864th and 2865th General Affairs and External Relations Council Meetings. *Press Release*, April 29, 2008; 2897th General Affairs and External Relations Council Meeting. *Press Release*, October 13, 2008. Some international human rights groups protested against a visit by the head of the Uzbek state security service—who had been subject to the visa ban lifted by the COE—to Germany in late October 2008. He reportedly advised German officials on IJU activities in Central Asia.

²⁸ OSCE. Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). *Report from the OSCE/ODIHR Trial Monitoring in Uzbekistan*, April 21, 2006; Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Republic of Uzbekistan. *Comments on the Report Prepared by the OSCE ODIHR*, April 19, 2006.

Actions of the IMU and IJU in 2006-2008

Pakistan reported in November 2006 that it had arrested IJU members who had placed rockets near presidential offices, the legislature, and the headquarters of military intelligence in Islamabad. Reportedly, the IJU was targeting the government because of its support for the United States.²⁹ Pakistani media reported in March-April 2007 that dozens of IMU members had been killed in northern Pakistan when local tribes turned against them, possibly reducing their strength or forcing them to move into Afghanistan and Central Asia. More alleged IMU and IJU members were reported killed by Pakistani forces during fighting in North Waziristan in October 2007. Indicating a widening of the IMU's focus, Tohir Yuldashev called in January 2008 for creating a Shariah state in Pakistan.

Officials in Germany arrested several individuals on September 5, 2007, on charges of planning explosions at the U.S. airbase at Ramstein, at U.S. and Uzbek diplomatic offices, and other targets in Germany. The IJU claimed responsibility and stated that it was targeting U.S. and Uzbek interests because of these countries' "brutal policies towards Muslims," and targeting Germany because it has a small military base in Termez, Uzbekistan, which is used to support NATO operations in Afghanistan. Reportedly, the suspects had received training at IMU and al Qaeda terrorist training camps in Pakistan, and had received their orders from Gofir Salimov (not apprehended), who is wanted in Uzbekistan in connection with the 2004 bombings. The suspects were part of a larger IJU branch in Germany of about 30 members. In U.S. Congressional testimony on September 10, 2007, the then-Director of the National Counterterrorism Center, John Redd, and the then-Director of National Intelligence, Mike McConnell, stated that U.S. communications intercepts shared with Germany had facilitated foiling the plot.

Among other IJU activities in 2008:

- In January 2008, an IJU website seemed to indicate that Abu Laith al-Libi—an al Qaeda official who had been killed by the United States in Pakistan—had been one of the leaders of the IJU.³⁰
- In March 2008, an IJU website claimed that one of its members—the German-born Cunyt Ciftci (alias Saad Abu Fourkan)—had assisted Taliban forces in Afghanistan by carrying out a suicide bombing that killed two Afghan and two U.S. troops and wounded several others.³¹ According to the IJU website and other sources, IJU is playing a more significant role in fighting in Afghanistan.
- In May 2008, French, German, and Dutch authorities reported that they had detained ten individuals for suspicion of running a network to funnel money to the IMU in Uzbekistan.
- In June 2008, an IJU video claimed that one Uzbek IJU member had taken part in the 1999 attack in Kyrgyzstan, and later had fought in Afghanistan against the Northern Alliance and then against U.S. and NATO forces. Another Uzbek

²⁹ BBC Monitoring South Asia, November 4, 2006.

³⁰ Guido Steinberg, *A Turkish al-Qaeda: The Islamic Jihad Union and the Internationalization of Uzbek Jihadism*, Center for Contemporary Conflict, 2008; U.S. Senate. Select Committee on Intelligence. Prepared Testimony of Director of National Intelligence Michael McConnell: The Annual Threat Assessment, February 5, 2008.

³¹ Guido Steinberg, *A Turkish al-Qaeda*; *UPI*, March 17, 2008.

member had been trained in Chechnya by Khattab in 1998 and also had fought against U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan.³²

- In late September 2008, German authorities reported the arrest of two suspected members of IJU and issued wanted posters for two other suspected members. The four allegedly had received terrorist training in Pakistani IJU camps. German authorities also arrested two people allegedly attempting to leave the country to undergo terrorism training in Pakistan by the IJU (they later were released on the grounds of inconclusive evidence).³³
- A video released by the Islamic Jihad Union (IJU) terrorist organization in late October 2008 stated that as long as Germany supports NATO operations in Afghanistan, and uses a base in Uzbekistan to support these operations, it is subject to IJU attacks.³⁴

U.S. Designation of the IMU and IJU as Terrorist Organizations

In September 2000, the State Department designated the IMU as a Foreign Terrorist Organization, stating that the IMU, aided by Afghanistan's Taliban and by Osama bin Laden, resorts to terrorism, actively threatens U.S. interests, and attacks American citizens. The "main goal of the IMU is to topple the current government in Uzbekistan," the State Department warned, and it linked the IMU to bombings and attacks on Uzbekistan in 1999-2000. IMU forces assisting the Taliban and Al Qaeda suffered major losses during coalition actions in Afghanistan, and Namanganiy was probably killed.³⁵

Former CIA Director Porter Goss testified in March 2005 that the IJG/IJU "has become a more virulent threat to U.S. interests and local governments."³⁶ In May 2005, the State Department designated the IJG/IJU as a Foreign Terrorist Organization and Specially Designated Global Terrorist, and in June, the U.N. Security Council added the IJG/IJU to its terrorism list.³⁷ In June 2008, Jalolov and his associate Suhayl Fatilloevich Buranov were added to the U.N. 1267 Sanctions Committee's Consolidated List of individuals and entities associated with bin Laden, al Qaeda, and the Taliban. Also, the U.S. Treasury Department ordered that any of their assets under U.S. jurisdiction be frozen and prohibited U.S. citizens from financial dealings with the terrorists.³⁸

³² CEDR, August 4, 2008, Doc. No. CEP-318001.

³³ Simon Sturdee, "German Commandos Arrest Two Terror Suspects on Aircraft," *Agence France Presse*, September 26, 2008; Craig Whitlock, "Germany Pulls Two Suspected Terrorism Trainees from Plane," *Washington Post*, September 27, 2008, p. A14.

³⁴ Open Source Center Analysis. *German Terrorist Manhunt Shows Authorities' Concerns*, November 12, 2008, Doc. No. EUF-496001.

³⁵ U.S. Department of State. *Patterns of Global Terrorism 2003*, April 2004.

³⁶ U.S. Senate. Committee on Armed Services. Testimony of the Director of Central Intelligence, The Honorable Porter J. Goss, March 17, 2005.

³⁷ U.S. Department of State. Press Statement: U.S. Department of State Designates the Islamic Jihad Group Under Executive Order 13224, May 26, 2005; U.N. Security Council. The Al-Qaida and Taliban Sanctions Committee. Press Release: Security Council Committee Adds One Entity to Al-Qaida Section of Consolidated List, SC/8405, June 3, 2005.

³⁸ U.S. Department of the Treasury. Press Release: Treasury Designates Leadership of the IJU Terrorist Group, June 18, 2008.

Democratization and Human Rights

A major goal of U.S. policy in Central Asia has been to foster the long-term development of democratic institutions and respect for human rights. Particularly since September 11, 2001, the United States has attempted to harmonize its concerns about democratization and human rights in the region with its interests in regional support for the Global War on Terrorism. According to some allegations, the former Bush Administration may have sent suspected terrorists in its custody to Uzbekistan for questioning, a process termed “extraordinary rendition.”³⁹ Although not verifying such transfers specifically to Uzbekistan, the former Bush Administration stated that, under the rendition policy, it received diplomatic assurances that transferees would not be tortured. Several citizens of Central Asian states who were held in U.S. custody at the Guantanamo Bay Naval Base have been returned to their home countries.⁴⁰

Several of the Central Asian leaders have declared that they are committed to democratization. Despite such pledges, the states have made little progress, according to the State Department.⁴¹ During Nazarbayev’s 1994 U.S. visit, he and then-President Clinton signed a Charter on Democratic Partnership that recognized Kazakhstan’s commitments to the rule of law, respect for human rights, and economic reform. During his December 2001 and September 2006 visits, Nazarbayev repeated these pledges in joint statements with then-President Bush. In March 2002, a U.S.-Uzbek Strategic Partnership Declaration was signed pledging Uzbekistan to “intensify the democratic transformation” and improve freedom of the press. During his December 2002 U.S. visit, Tajikistan’s President Rahmon pledged to “expand fundamental freedoms and human rights.”

Until recently, almost all the leaders in Central Asia had been in place since before the breakup of the Soviet Union (the exception was the leader of Tajikistan, who had been ousted in the early 1990s during a civil war). These leaders long held onto power by orchestrating extensions of their terms, holding suspect elections, eliminating possible contenders, and providing emoluments to supporters and relatives. After this long period of leadership stability, President Akayev of Kyrgyzstan was toppled in a coup in 2005 (see below), and President Niyazov of Turkmenistan died in late 2006, marking the passing of three out of five Soviet-era regional leaders from the scene.

Possible scenarios of political futures in Central Asia have ranged from continued rule in most of the states by elite groups that became ensconced during the Soviet era to violent transitions to Islamic fundamentalist rule. Relatively peaceful and quick transitions to more or less democratic and Western-oriented political systems have been considered less likely by many observers. While some observers warn that Islamic extremism could increase dramatically in the region,

³⁹ *The New Yorker*, February 14, 2005; *New York Times*, May 1, 2005; *New York Times*, December 31, 2005; Representative Edward Markey, *Congressional Record*, December 13, 2005, p. H11337; European Parliament. Temporary Committee on the Alleged Use of European Countries by the CIA for the Transport And Illegal Detention of Prisoners, *Draft Interim Report*, 2006/2027(INI), April 24, 2006; and *On the Testimony by Craig Murray, Former British Ambassador*, Working Document No. 5, June 1, 2006.

⁴⁰ House Committee on Foreign Affairs. Subcommittee on International Organizations, Human Rights, and Oversight. Hearing: City on the Hill or Prison on the Bay? The Mistakes of Guantanamo and the Decline of America’s Image, May 6, 2008; Hearing: Rendition and the Department of State, June 10, 2008. At least three Tajiks returned to Tajikistan from Guantanamo were then tried and imprisoned on charges of belonging to al Qaeda or the IMU.

⁴¹ U.S. Department of State. Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2007.

others discount the risk that the existing secular governments soon will be overthrown by Islamic extremists.⁴²

In the case of the three succession transitions so far, Tajikistan's resulted in a shift in the Soviet-era regional/clan elite configuration and some limited inclusion of the Islamic Renaissance Party. Perhaps worrisome, Tajik President Rahmon has written a "spiritual guide" reminiscent of the one penned by Turkmenistan's late authoritarian president, and has given orders on how citizens should live and dress. Kyrgyzstan's appears to involve power-sharing by Soviet-era regional/clan elites. The Kyrgyz government appears recently to be backsliding on democratization. In Turkmenistan, it appears that Soviet-era elites have retained power following Niyazov's death and have eschewed meaningful democratization.

Recent Developments in Kazakhstan

In May 2007, President Nazarbayev proposed changes to the constitution that he claimed would increase legislative power and boost democratization. He explained that after Kazakhstan gained independence, "the need to build Kazakh statehood and a market economy from scratch demanded [that] I assume all the responsibility.... But today, when the process of modernization of the country is irreversible ... the time has come [for] a new system of checks and balances." The legislature approved the changes the next day. The changes include increasing the number of deputies in the Majilis and Senate, permitting the president to be active in a political party, and decreasing the president's term in office from seven to five years (reversing a 1998 change from five to seven years). One change requires a two-thirds vote in each legislative chamber to override presidential alterations to approved bills. Another provision specifies that nine Majilis deputies are appointed by the People's Assembly (a public body mentioned in the constitution for the first time). An implementing Constitutional Act on Elections approved in June 2007 provides for electing the other 98 Majilis deputies by party lists.

Some critics considered that many of the changes were superficially reformist and perhaps aimed at convincing the OSCE that Kazakhstan was democratizing and should be granted its request to chair the OSCE in 2009. Other observers praised some of the changes as progressive if fully implemented, such as the requirement for a court order in case of detention or arrest. Perhaps indicating another reason for the changes, a legislative "initiative" excluded Nazarbayev from term limits. Visiting U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Richard Boucher met with Kazakhstani officials in June 2007 and stated that "these constitutional amendments go in the right direction. The overall effect over the long term could be to strengthen political parties [and] the power of parliament. There have been concerns about the lifting of term limits on the president, but it remains to be seen how that will work out in the longer term.... It's a good legal framework. It points the way to a stable, democratic system."⁴³

Similar to the events of late 1993, deputies in Kazakhstan's Majilis (the lower legislative chamber) in June 2007 ostensibly requested that President Nursultan Nazarbayev cut short their

⁴² Analyst Adeeb Khalid argues that the elites and populations of the regional states still hold many attitudes and follow many practices imposed during the Soviet period of rule. This "Sovietism" makes it difficult for either Islamic extremism or democratization to make headway, he suggests. Khalid, p. 193. For a perhaps more troubling view of the threat of Islamic extremism, see above, "Overview of U.S. Policy Concerns."

⁴³ U.S. Embassy, Astana, Kazakhstan. Interview by Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asian Affairs Richard A. Boucher with Aybek Aldabergenov of Era TV, June 6, 2007.

terms and hold early elections. He acceded to the request the next day and the election was scheduled for August 18, 2007. As per constitutional amendments and election law changes, the size of the Majilis increased from 77 to 107 members. Ninety-eight members are elected by party lists and nine by the People's Assembly (which is headed by the president). At the opening of the headquarters for the main pro-government party, Nur-Otan (Fatherland's Ray of Light), on July 2, Nazarbayev appeared to endorse a predominant role for Nur-Otan when he allegedly claimed (erroneously) that since World War II, Japan has flourished under the one party rule of the Liberal Democrats. Seven parties were registered for the election, six of which are pro-government and one of which is an opposition party. Local legislative elections also took place, but these involved voting for individuals rather than party lists.

Nur-Otan reportedly received 88.05% of 8.87 million votes cast and won all 98 seats. The other six parties running were unable to clear a 7% threshold needed to win seats. In a preliminary assessment, observers from the OSCE praised some positive aspects of the vote, but judged it as falling short of a free and fair race. They were critical of irregularities in counting ballots, a high vote hurdle for parties to win seats, the appointment of nine deputies, and no provision for candidates who were not party-affiliated to run. One Russian pundit observed that an ever-dwindling number of parties have won seats in legislative elections since Kazakhstan gained independence. On the other hand, U.S. analyst Ariel Cohen hailed "a relatively clean election that demonstrates high popular support."⁴⁴

Although Kazakhstan lobbied extensively for holding the presidency of the OSCE in 2009, the 15th Ministerial Meeting of the OSCE in Madrid in late November 2007 decided that Greece would hold the OSCE presidency in 2009, followed in 2010 by Kazakhstan. This positive decision was made despite the appearance in early November of the final report of the OSCE's Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), which assessed Kazakhstan's August legislative election as not meeting OSCE commitments (although the election was considered improved over previous races). Kazakhstan was among several CIS members that called in 2007 for restricting the scope of election observation by ODIHR. Also in late October 2007, Kazakh authorities were alleged to have closed down several independent newspapers and Internet sites.

Despite some reservations, then-Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Evan Feigenbaum stated that the Bush Administration had supported Kazakhstan's OSCE presidency as "a historic opportunity for Kazakhstan." He stressed that Kazakhstan had pledged at the meeting to uphold the mandate of ODIHR and to implement changes to the electoral code, media law, and political party law by the end of 2008.⁴⁵ Addressing the Parliamentary Assembly of the OSCE in Astana on June 29, 2008, President Nazarbayev stated that his country's preparations for holding the chairmanship included the elaboration of a blueprint he termed "the path to Europe," which envisages Kazakhstan's integration with Europe in the areas of energy, transport, technology transfers, education, culture, and democratization. He reaffirmed that Kazakhstan would implement reforms to foster a multiparty system, a multiparty legislature, and free media, but cautioned that such reforms would accord with Kazakh cultural values. Testifying to Congress in July 2008, a Kazakh

⁴⁴ OSCE. Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. Republic of Kazakhstan Parliamentary Elections, 18 August 2007: OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission Report, October 30, 2007; Open Source Center. Central Eurasia: Daily Report (hereafter CEDR), August 22, 2007, Doc. No. CEP-950376; Ariel Cohen, "Kazakh Vote: A Step Forward," Washington Times, August 21, 2007.

⁴⁵ U.S. Department of State. Evan Feigenbaum ... Interview With Navbahor Imamova of Voice of America, December 17, 2007.

diplomat criticized congressional inquiries about democratization progress, stating that “it is very offending to us to hear when someone continuously doubts the sincerity of Kazakhstan’s efforts.” He gave assurances that all the reforms pledged in November 2007 at the OSCE Summit would be implemented by the end of 2008.⁴⁶

The 2005 Coup in Kyrgyzstan

Demonstrations in Kyrgyzstan against a tainted legislative election and economic distress resulted in President Akayev’s relatively peaceful overthrow in March 2005. Some observers hailed this coup as the third so-called “democratic revolution” in Eurasia, after those in Georgia and Ukraine, and the first in Central Asia. They suggested that the country, because of its slightly wider scope of civil liberties compared to the rest of Central Asia, might lead the region in democratic reforms. Other observers have cautioned that governmental corruption, institutional weakness, and pro-Russian overtures could jeopardize Kyrgyzstan’s independence.⁴⁷

Opposition politician and acting president Kurmanbek Bakiyev received 88.71% of about 2.0 million votes in a 7-person presidential election held on July 10, 2005. The OSCE stated that “fundamental civil and political rights were generally respected,” but it raised concerns about “problematic” vote tabulation. In November and December 2006, conflict between the executive and legislative branches over the balance of powers resulted in the passage of successive constitutions, with President Bakiyev appearing to lose and then win back some presidential powers (for background, see CRS Report RL32864, *Coup in Kyrgyzstan: Developments and Implications*, by Jim Nichol; and CRS Report RS22546, *Kyrgyzstan’s Constitutional Crisis: Context and Implications for U.S. Interests*, by Jim Nichol).

In late September 2007, the pro-Bakiyev constitutional court invalidated all constitutional changes since the adoption of the 2003 constitution. Bakiyev announced a few days later that he was setting up and supporting a new political party, the Ak Dzhol People’s Party. He then pushed through a snap referendum on October 21, 2007 on a draft constitution he unveiled that set forth strong presidential powers.⁴⁸ The next day, he dissolved the legislature and set new elections for December 16, 2007, a move many observers viewed as preventing opposition parties from carrying out effective campaigns during the short period of time.⁴⁹ Some of those who observed the vote on the new constitution alleged that many irregularities took place.

⁴⁶ Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (Helsinki Commission). *Hearing: Promises to Keep, Kazakhstan’s 2010 OSCE Chairmanship*, July 22, 2008.

⁴⁷ Analyst Matthew Fuhrmann, who was in Kyrgyzstan during the coup, states that it fundamentally was an action led by citizens who mobilized to replace what they viewed as a corrupt and undemocratic regime, and was not merely a clan-based or criminal-led effort. “A Tale of Two Social Capitals: Revolutionary Collective Action in Kyrgyzstan,” *Problems of Post-Communism*, November/December 2006, pp. 16-29. Other observers suggest that the coup was more a clan-based shift of power than a spontaneous popular uprising. Kathleen Collins, “The Logic of Clan Politics: Evidence from the Central Asian Trajectories,” *World Politics*, January 2004, pp. 224-261; S. Frederick Starr, *Clans, Authoritarian Rulers, and Parliaments in Central Asia*, Silk Road Paper, June 2006.

⁴⁸ The Venice Commission concluded that the draft constitution placed an “excessive concentration of power in the hands of the president,” so that “the powers of the president are almost unrestricted.” The legislature “is not an effective counterweight.” European Commission for Democracy Through Law (Venice Commission). *Opinion on the Constitutional Situation in the Kyrgyz Republic*, Opinion No. 457/2007, December 17, 2007.

⁴⁹ In a perhaps telling move, the Ak Dzhol Party placed Cholpon Bayekova, the chairwoman of the Constitutional Court, at the head of its party list.

Twelve parties were registered for the December 2007 election. The new constitution established a 90-seat legislature elected by party lists. A new election law stated that a party could not win seats unless it received 5% or more of the vote of all registered voters. Another provision stated that a party could not win seats unless it gained at least 0.5% of the vote in each region. This provision did not specify how the percentage was to be calculated, leading to controversy that was eventually settled by a Supreme Court decision.

Voting on election day was essentially peaceful. Initial results appeared to indicate that only Ak Dzhol and Ata Mekan had surpassed the 5% hurdle, but that Ata Mekan might be disqualified because it had not received 0.5% of the vote in one region. On December 18, media initially reported that the Supreme Court had struck down the 0.5% hurdle, but it was later reported that the court had required a different means of calculation, which still resulted in Ata Mekan reputedly being disqualified. Finally, the CEC announced on December 19 that Ak Dzhol, the Social Democratic Party, and the Communist Party had surpassed the hurdles and had won seats in the legislature, and that Ata Mekan had been disqualified based on the amended 0.5% rule. The next day, the CEC declared that Ak Dzhol had won 71 legislative seats, the Social Democrats 11 seats, and the Communists 8 seats, although it did not release final election results.

In its final report on the election, observers from the OSCE assessed the race as “fail[ing] to meet a number of OSCE commitments.” Although the observers fell short in declaring the results invalid, they stated that there were “serious irregularities and inconsistencies” in vote-counting, and that there was “questionable consistency” between reported preliminary and final results.⁵⁰

Succession in Turkmenistan

President Niyazov died on December 21, 2006, at age 66, ostensibly from a heart attack. The morning of his death, the government announced that deputy prime minister and health minister Gurbanguli Berdimuhamedow would serve as acting president. The Halk Maslahaty (HM or People’s Council, a supreme legislative-executive-regional conclave) convened on December 26 and changed the constitution to make legitimate Berdimuhamedow’s position as acting president. It quickly approved an electoral law and announced that the next presidential election would be held on February 11, 2007. The HM designated six candidates for the presidential election, one from each region, all of whom were government officials and members of the ruling Democratic Party. The ruling Democratic Party endorsed Berdimuhamedow as its candidate, thereby seemingly anointing him as Niyazov’s heir-apparent. Reportedly, 94% of 2.6 million voters turned out and 89.23% endorsed Berdimuhamedow. A small delegation from the OSCE allegedly was not allowed to view the election vote-counting and one member reportedly termed the vote a “play” rather than “real” election. According to the U.S. State Department, the election “represent[ed] a modest step toward political electoral change that could help create the conditions in the future for a free, fair, open and truly competitive elections.”⁵¹

⁵⁰ OSCE. Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. *Kyrgyz Republic Pre-Term Parliamentary Elections, 16 December 2007, OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission Final Report*, April 24, 2008. Referring to the OSCE preliminary assessment, the State Department evinced “serious concerns” about the conduct of the election and called for reforms. U.S. Department of State. *Press Release*, December 21, 2007.

⁵¹ CEDR, February 12, 2007, Doc. No. CEP-950160. U.S. Department of State. *Daily Press Briefing*, February 15, 2007.

A constitutional commission unveiled a draft constitution in July 2008 that after public debate was approved by the HM on September 26, 2008. The new constitution abolishes the HM and divides its powers between the Mejlis and the president. It calls for enlarging the Mejlis from 65 to 125 members.

An early legislative election was held on December 14, 2008. An OSCE pre-election needs assessment mission raised concerns that “a lack of distinction between civil society organizations, the party, and the State,” had resulted in only government-approved candidates running for seats. The mission recommended that only a few observers be deployed during the election, in order to advise officials of what should be done in the future to ensure free and fair elections.⁵² The Turkmen Central Electoral Commission reported that almost 94% of the electorate voted on December 14. At least two approved candidates ran in each district. President Berdimuhamedow hailed the election as advancing Turkmen democracy.⁵³

Recent Developments in Uzbekistan

The Uzbek CEC in mid-November 2007 approved four candidates to run in the prospective December 23, 2007, presidential election. Three of the candidates were nominated by pro-government political parties and one by a supposedly independent citizens’ initiative committee. Although the Uzbek constitution bars a president from more than two terms, the Uzbek CEC argued that since the most recent constitution was approved in 1992, Karimov’s “first term” should be considered as following his election in January 2000, and that he is eligible to run for a “second term” in December 2007.

Karimov won with 88% of 14.8 million votes with a 90.6% turnout.⁵⁴ A small election observation mission sponsored by OSCE ODIHR assessed the election as “generally fail[ing] to meet many OSCE commitments for democratic elections.” OSCE ODIHR reported that there were no campaign debates or open public meetings, and that media coverage was minimal. Each presidential candidate used similar language to laud economic development and democratization under the incumbent president. State-owned media urged the electorate to vote for the incumbent.⁵⁵ In his inaugural address on January 16, 2008, Karimov stated that the “historic election” might be remembered for centuries and thanked the citizenry “who gave me a massive vote of confidence by freely expressing their will [in an] election which was held in full compliance with our constitution and laws, international legal norms, and universally recognized democratic standards.”⁵⁶

Human Rights

The NGO Freedom House has included Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan among countries such as Cuba, Myanmar, North Korea, and Sudan that have the lowest possible ratings on political rights

⁵² OSCE. ODIHR. *Turkmenistan, Early Parliamentary Elections: OSCE/ODIHR Needs Assessment Mission Report*, October 20, 2008.

⁵³ *CEDR*, December 19, 2008, Doc. No. CEP-950107.

⁵⁴ The final vote turnout was reported two hours after the polls closed. Results that were termed “preliminary” were reported the next day (December 24), which were identical to “final” results reported on December 28.

⁵⁵ OSCE. ODIHR. *Final Report on the 23 December 2007 Presidential Election in Uzbekistan*, April 23, 2008.

⁵⁶ *CEDR*, January 16, 2008, Doc. No. CEP-950404.

and civil liberties.⁵⁷ In all the Central Asian states, adherents of non-favored faiths, missionaries, and pious Muslims face religious rights abuses, and unfair elections increase political alienation and violence aimed against the regimes.

Since 2001, the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) has recommended that the Secretary of State designate Uzbekistan a “country of particular concern” (CPC), where severe human rights violations could lead to U.S. sanctions. In November 2006, Secretary Rice designated Uzbekistan a CPC. In its more recent report in 2008, USCIRF reported that Uzbekistan had made scant efforts to address religious freedom abuses and should retain its CPC designation. In the case of religious freedom in Turkmenistan, USCIRF visited the country and talked to President Berdimuhamedow in August 2007, but recommended in its 2008 annual report—as it had since 2000—that Turkmenistan be designated a CPC. USCIRF stated that “the system of oppressive laws and practices that have led to severe violations of human rights, including freedom of religion or belief, remain in place. In addition, the overall repressive atmosphere that characterized public life in Turkmenistan under President Niyazov remains largely unchanged, and significant religious freedom problems and official harassment continue.”⁵⁸

In June 2006, the State Department downgraded Uzbekistan to “Tier 3,” for having problems as a source country for human trafficking that did not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking and was not making significant efforts to do so. No U.S. aid sanctions were reported as a direct result of the Tier 3 designation. In June 2008, Uzbekistan was found to have made some modest progress in addressing human trafficking problems, and was upgraded to the “Tier 2 Watch List.” According to the State Department, Uzbekistan in 2008 adopted an anti-trafficking law and demonstrated modest improvement in its victim assistance and protection efforts. However, the Uzbek government “did not amend its criminal code to increase penalties for convicted traffickers and did not provide financial or in-kind assistance to NGOs providing assistance to victims.... The government also did not take steps to end forced child labor during the annual cotton harvest.” In regard to other Central Asian countries, Tajikistan was downgraded from “Tier 2” to the “Tier 2 Watch List” because of the government’s “failure to provide evidence over the previous year of increasing efforts ... to investigate, prosecute, convict, and sentence traffickers.”⁵⁹

Among U.N. actions, the General Assembly in 2003 and 2004 approved resolutions expressing “grave concern” about human rights abuses in Turkmenistan and urging reforms. The U.N. Rapporteur on Torture in early 2003 completed a report that concluded that police and prison officials in Uzbekistan “systematically” employed torture.⁶⁰ In late 2005, the U.N. General

⁵⁷ Freedom House. *The Worst of the Worst: The World’s Most Repressive Societies*, September 6, 2006; May 9, 2007; and May 6, 2008.

⁵⁸ U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom. *Annual Report*, May 1, 2007; and *Annual Report*, May 1, 2008. USCIRF first urged that Uzbekistan be designated a CPC in its 2005 *Annual Report*. See also “Uzbekistan Religious Freedom Survey,” *Forum 18 News Service*, July 2008.

⁵⁹ U.S. Department of State. *Trafficking in Persons Report*, June 2006, June 2007, and June 2008.

⁶⁰ U.N. General Assembly. *Resolution: Situation of Human Rights in Turkmenistan*, 58/194, December 22, 2003; *Resolution: Situation of Human Rights in Turkmenistan*, 59/206, December 20, 2004. U.N. Economic and Social Council. Commission on Human Rights. Special Rapporteur on the Question of Torture, Theo van Boven. *Report of the Special Rapporteur Submitted in Accordance with Commission Resolution 2002/38. Addendum: Mission to Uzbekistan*, E/CN.4/2003/68/Add.2, annex, February 3, 2003. U.N. Special Rapporteur on the Question of Torture, Manfred Nowak. *Report by the Special Rapporteur. Addendum: Follow-up to the Recommendations Made by the Special Rapporteur*, E/CN.4/2006/6/Add.2, March 21, 2006.

Assembly's Third Committee approved resolutions critical of human rights violations in Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The resolution on Turkmenistan expressed "grave concern" about political repression, media censorship, religious minority group harassment, and detainee torture. The resolution on Uzbekistan expressed "grave concern" about violence against civilians in Andijon and called on the government to permit an international investigation. The Uzbek representative asserted that the resolution contained no credible facts and ignored Uzbekistan's right to defend its constitutional order against terrorists.⁶¹ In late 2007, the U.N. Committee Against Torture stated that it "remained concerned that [in Uzbekistan] there were numerous reports of abuses in custody, and many deaths, some of which were alleged to have followed torture or ill-treatment."⁶²

Amnesty International was among NGOs that submitted petitions to the December 2008 session of the revamped U.N. Human Rights Council (UNHRC) alleging ongoing Uzbek human rights abuses.⁶³ UNHRC also examined human rights in Turkmenistan at this session. On Uzbekistan, the UNHRC agreed to a report by its working group that called for the government to give accreditation to major international human rights organizations, adopt legislation to promote gender equality, modify the criminal code to establish a definition of torture, and take measures to prevent torture, and eliminate forced child labor, among other recommendations. On Turkmenistan, the UNHRC agreed to a report by its working group that called for the government to eliminate the use of torture, protect the human rights of journalists and human rights defenders, ensure greater independence of the judiciary, and ensure that opposition parties are permitted to participate freely, among other recommendations.⁶⁴

Among other human rights abuses, higher educational institutions were closed in cotton-growing areas of Tajikistan and college students reportedly were given "permission" by Tajik President Rakhmanov to take part in cotton-picking in September-October 2008. Reportedly, however, the students faced expulsion if they did not participate. In Uzbekistan, some high-school students ordered to pick cotton or face expulsion allegedly had been beaten in the fields. Several Western retail stores announced a boycott of Uzbek cotton products.⁶⁵ At the end of October 2008, Uzbek President Karimov reportedly issued a decree to increase the efficiency of agriculture by consolidating small lease-holdings into larger farms. Some farmers alleged that they were being coerced into relinquishing their long-term land leases.⁶⁶ In January 2009, the Kyrgyz government arrested several opposition politicians just before they reportedly were scheduled to travel abroad

⁶¹ U.N. General Assembly. Third Committee. Draft Resolution: Situation of Human Rights in Turkmenistan, A/C.3/60/L.46, November 2, 2005; Draft Resolution: Situation of Human Rights in Uzbekistan, A/C.3/60/L.51, November 2, 2005; Press Release: Third Committee ... Approves Text Expressing Deep Concern over Human Rights Situation in Uzbekistan, GA/SHC/3843, November 22, 2005.

⁶² U.N. Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Committee Against Torture. *Press Release: Committee Against Torture Concludes Thirty-ninth Session*, November 23, 2007.

⁶³ Amnesty International. Uzbekistan: Submission to the U.N. Universal Periodic Review Working Group, U.N. Human Rights Council, July 21, 2008.

⁶⁴ U.N. General Assembly. UNHRC. *Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Uzbekistan*, A/HRC/10/83, March 11, 2009; *Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Turkmenistan*, A/HRC/10/79, January 6, 2009; *Draft Report of the Human Rights Council on its Tenth Session*, A/HRC/10/L.11, March 31, 2009.

⁶⁵ CEDR, September 23, 2008, Doc. No. CEP-950217; September 24, 2008, Doc. No. CEP-950308; November 1, 2008, Doc. No. CEP-950083; International Labor Rights Forum, *Uzbekistan Update: Government Still Forcing Young Children to Harvest Cotton Despite Pledges to Ban the Practice*, November 2008; "Wal-Mart Bans Uzbekistan's Child-Picked Cotton," *RFE/RL Watchdog*, October 1, 2008.

⁶⁶ CEDR, November 14, 2008, Doc. No. CEP-950124.

to a democratization conference. Omurbek Tekebayev, head of the Ata-Mekan Party, was charged with illegally repairing a hunting rifle he owned. Erkin Bulekbayev, the leader of the Greens Party, was arrested for defacing a photo of the Kyrgyz president.

Security and Arms Control

The U.S.-led coalition's overthrow of the Taliban and routing of Al Qaeda and IMU terrorists in Afghanistan (termed Operation Enduring Freedom or OEF) increased the security of Central Asia. According to then-Assistant Secretary of Defense J. D. Crouch in testimony in June 2002, "our military relationships with each [Central Asian] nation have matured on a scale not imaginable prior to September 11th." Crouch averred that "for the foreseeable future, U.S. defense and security cooperation in Central Asia must continue to support actions to deter or defeat terrorist threats" and to build effective armed forces under civilian control.

According to Crouch:

- Kyrgyzstan became a "critical regional partner" in OEF, providing basing for U.S. and coalition forces at Manas (in early 2009, U.S., French, and Spanish troops and personnel reportedly numbered about 1,650).
- Uzbekistan provided a base for U.S. operations at Karshi-Khanabad (K2; just before the pullout, U.S. troops reportedly numbered less than 900), a base for German units at Termez (in mid-2008, German troops reportedly numbered about 300), and a land corridor to Afghanistan for humanitarian aid via the Friendship Bridge at Termez.
- Tajikistan permitted use of its international airport in Dushanbe for refueling ("gas-and-go") and hosted a French force (in early 2008, French troops numbered 100-200).
- Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan provided overflight and other support.⁶⁷

To obtain Uzbekistan's approval for basing, the 2002 U.S.-Uzbek Strategic Partnership Declaration included a nonspecific security guarantee. The United States affirmed that "it would regard with grave concern any external threat" to Uzbekistan's security and would consult with Uzbekistan "on an urgent basis" regarding a response. The two states pledged to intensify military cooperation, including "re-equipping the Armed Forces" of Uzbekistan, a pledge that appeared to be repudiated by Uzbekistan following events in Andijon.

Although U.S. security assistance to the region was boosted in the aftermath of 9/11, such aid has lessened since then as a percentage of all such aid to Eurasia, particularly after aid to Uzbekistan was cut in FY2004 and subsequent years (see below). Security and law enforcement aid to Central Asia was 31% (\$188 million) of all such aid to Eurasia in FY2002, but had declined to 14% (\$203 million) in FY2007. Of all budgeted assistance to Central Asia over the period from FY1992-FY2007, security and law enforcement aid accounted for a little over one-fifth. Security and law enforcement aid includes Foreign Military Financing (FMF), International Military Education and Training (IMET), and Excess Defense Articles (EDA) programs and border

⁶⁷ Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Subcommittee on Central Asia and the South Caucasus. *Statement of J.D. Crouch II, Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Policy*, June 27, 2002.

security aid to combat trafficking in drugs, humans, and WMD. A new Defense Department counter-terrorism train and equip program (created under Section 1206 of the National Defense Authorization Act for FY2006-FY2007; P.L. 109-163) provided \$20 million to Kazakhstan in FY2006 and \$19.3 million in FY2007. Another new Defense Department program for defense articles, services, training or other support for reconstruction, stabilization, and security activities (created under Section 1207 of P.L. 109-163) provided \$9.9 million to Tajikistan in FY2008.

To help counter burgeoning drug trafficking from Afghanistan, war supplementals for FY2005 (P.L. 109-13), FY2006 (P.L. 109-234), and FY2008 (P.L. 110-252) have provided some assistance to Central Asia. Sec. 1026 of the National Defense Authorization Act for FY2009 (P.L. 110-417) calls for the Defense Department to submit a report to Congress on a drug control strategy for FY2010 for Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, China, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan. In September 2008, the Chief of Staff of Tajikistan's Border Guard Forces, Major General Sharaf Fayzulloyev, praised the U.S. State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement (INL) for providing nearly \$1.1 million to upgrade three Tajik-Afghan border posts. He alleged that "Afghanistan does not protect its border, therefore, we have to protect it unilaterally. We do not even meet Afghan [border guards on the Shurobod-Khwahan districts] border section, because the chiefs of Afghan border posts themselves lead drug trafficking groups."⁶⁸

In addition to the aid reported by the Coordinator's Office, the Defense Department provides coalition support payments to Kyrgyzstan, including base lease payments and landing and overflight fees that amount to about \$64 million (see below). Uzbekistan received a payment of \$15.7 million for use of K2 and associated services. On October 5, 2005, an amendment to Defense Appropriations for FY2006 (H.R. 2863) was approved in the Senate to place a one-year hold on Defense Department plans to pay another \$23 million. Despite this congressional concern, the Defense Department transferred the payment in November 2005. The conferees on H.R. 2863 later dropped the amendment (H.Rept. 109-360; P.L. 109-359).

U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) in 1999 became responsible for U.S. military engagement in Central Asia. It cooperates with the European Command (USEUCOM), on the Caspian Maritime Security Cooperation program (similar to the former Caspian [Sea] Guard program). Gen. Bantz Craddock, Commander of USEUCOM, testified in 2008 that the Caspian Maritime Security Cooperation program coordinates security assistance provided by U.S. agencies to Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan. He stated that U.S. Naval Forces Europe cooperates with U.S. Naval Forces Central Command "to promote maritime safety and security and maritime domain awareness in the Caspian Sea."⁶⁹ Russia objects to the involvement of non-littoral countries in Caspian maritime security and has appeared to counter U.S. maritime security aid by boosting the capabilities of its Caspian Sea Flotilla and by urging the littoral states to coordinate their naval activities exclusively with Russia.

⁶⁸ CEDR, September 22, 2008, Doc. No. CEP-950194; "U.S. Government Continues Support for Tajik Border Security," *Asia Pulse*, September 15, 2008.

⁶⁹ House of Representatives. Armed Services Committee. *Statement of General Bantz J. Craddock, Commander, United States European Command*, March 13, 2008. Caspian Sea Maritime Proliferation Prevention aid to Kazakhstan was \$4 million in FY2005, \$5 million in FY2006, and \$7 million in FY2007, and \$8 million was requested for each of FY2008 and FY2009. U.S. Department of Defense. Defense Threat Reduction Agency. *FY2008-FY2009 Budget Estimates: Former Soviet Union Threat Reduction*, February 2007.

The Commander of USCENTCOM periodically visits the Central Asian states. During a visit to Kazakhstan in November 2007, then-Commander William Fallon discussed a new five-year military cooperation with Kazakhstan's defense minister. The defense ministry praised the previous five-year plan for providing training for 200 troops in the United States, a number of High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicles (Humvees), the imminent delivery of two UH-1H Huey-2 helicopters, and the refurbishment of the base in Atyrau for the Western Military Command's infantry battalion, among other cooperation. President Karimov hailed a visit by Fallon to Uzbekistan in January 2008 as a sign of improving U.S.-Uzbek relations. Fallon also visited Turkmenistan and Tajikistan in January 2008. In Tajikistan, he welcomed Tajik offers to help train Afghan military forces. In January 2009, Gen. David Pataeus, USCENTCOM Commander, visited several Central Asian states to discuss the possible transit of U.S. and NATO supplies to support operations in Afghanistan.

All the Central Asian states except Tajikistan joined NATO's PFP by mid-1994 (Tajikistan joined in 2002). Central Asian troops have participated in periodic PFP (or "PFP-style") exercises in the United States since 1995, and U.S. troops have participated in exercises in Central Asia since 1997. A June 2004 NATO summit communique pledged enhanced Alliance attention to the countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia, and the NATO Secretary General appointed a Special Representative for the Caucasus and Central Asia. Uzbekistan sharply reduced its participation in PFP after NATO raised concerns that Uzbek security forces had used excessive and disproportionate force in Andijon (however, it continued to permit Germany to use a base at Termez). Perhaps marking a turn-around in relations, President Karimov attended the NATO Summit in Bucharest, Romania, in early April 2008 and stated that Uzbekistan was ready to discuss the transit of non-lethal goods and equipment by NATO through Uzbekistan to Afghanistan. This issue was part of the agenda during Assistant Secretary Boucher's May 30-June 3, 2008, visit to Uzbekistan.

Kazakhstan's progress in military reform enabled NATO in January 2006 to elevate it to participation in an Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP). The NATO Secretary General's Special Envoy for the Caucasus and Central Asia, Robert Simmons, in April 2008 announced that Kazakhstan was making good progress in implementing the IPAP. Kazakhstan has stated that it does not plan to join NATO but wants to modernize its armed forces. According to analyst Roger McDermott, despite Kazakhstan's cooperation with NATO, "the defense relationship between Kazakhstan and Russia has, in fact, substantially deepened."⁷⁰ The Kazakh defense ministry has reported, for instance, that "1,259 Kazakh servicemen are now studying at Russian military educational establishments," constituting a substantial boost over previous years.⁷¹

According to some reports, the Defense Department has been considering possibly setting up long-term military facilities in Central Asia termed Cooperative Security Locations (CSLs; they might contain pre-positioned equipment and be managed by private contractors, and few if any U.S. military personnel may be present). The Overseas Basing Commission in 2005 acknowledged that U.S. national security might be enhanced by future CSLs in Central Asia but urged Congress to seek inter-agency answers to "what constitutes vital U.S. interests in the area that would require long-term U.S. presence."⁷² According to former USCENTCOM Commander

⁷⁰ Roger McDermott, *Kazakhstan's Defense Policy: An Assessment Of The Trends*, Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, February 2009.

⁷¹ CEDR, April 14, 2009, Doc. No. CEP-950316.

⁷² Commission on Review of the Overseas Military Facility Structure of the United States. *Interim Report*, May 9, (continued...)

Fallon, the Bagram airbase in Afghanistan is the Forward Operating Site (basing intended for rotational use by operating forces with limited U.S. military support presence and possibly pre-positioned equipment) for access to and operations in Central Asia. USCENTCOM's FY2008 Master Plan for infrastructure requirements at its U.S. overseas military facilities reportedly placed a high priority on sustaining long-term access to locations across its area of responsibility.⁷³

Closure of the Karshi-Khanabad Airbase

On July 5, 2005, the presidents of Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan signed a declaration issued during a meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO; see above, "Obstacles to Peace and Independence: Regional Tensions and Conflicts") that stated that "as large-scale military operations against terrorism have come to an end in Afghanistan, the SCO member states maintain that the relevant parties to the anti-terrorist coalition should set a deadline for the temporary use of ... infrastructure facilities of the SCO member states and for their military presence in these countries."⁷⁴ Despite this declaration, none of the Central Asian leaders immediately called for closing the coalition bases. However, after the United States and others interceded so that refugees who fled from Andijon to Kyrgyzstan could fly to Romania, Uzbekistan on July 29 demanded that the United States vacate K2 within six months. On November 21, 2005, the United States officially ceased operations to support Afghanistan at K2. Perhaps indicative of the reversal of U.S. military-to-military and other ties, former pro-U.S. defense minister Qodir Gulomov was convicted of treason and received seven years in prison, later suspended. Many K2 activities shifted to the Manas airbase in Kyrgyzstan. Some observers viewed the closure of K2 and souring U.S.-Uzbek relations as setbacks to U.S. influence in the region and as gains for Russian and Chinese influence. Others suggested that U.S. ties with other regional states provided continuing influence and that U.S. criticism of human rights abuses might pay future dividends among regional populations.⁷⁵

Possibly a sign of improving U.S.-Uzbek relations, in early 2008 Uzbekistan reportedly permitted U.S. military personnel under NATO command, on a case-by-case basis, to transit through an airbase near the town of Termez that it has permitted Germany to operate as part of NATO peacekeeping operations in Afghanistan.⁷⁶ Similarly, during a visit to Uzbekistan in late May-early June 2008, Assistant Secretary of State Richard Boucher discussed issues associated with Uzbekistan's expressed willingness to facilitate the rail transit of non-lethal goods and equipment from NATO countries to support operations in Afghanistan. He praised some recent progress by

(...continued)

2005.

⁷³ House of Representatives. Appropriations Committee. Subcommittee on Military Construction. *Statement of Admiral William J. Fallon, Commander, U.S. Central Command, on Military Construction in U.S. Central Command*, April 17, 2007; General Accountability Office. *Defense Infrastructure: Overseas Master Plans Are Improving, but DOD Needs to Provide Congress Additional Information about the Military Buildup on Guam*, GAO Report No. GAO-07-1015, September 12, 2007.

⁷⁴ CEDR, July 5, 2005, Doc. No. CPP-249.

⁷⁵ On growing Chinese regional influence, see Michael Mihalka, "Counter-insurgency, Counter-terrorism, State-Building and Security Cooperation in Central Asia," *The China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, May 2006.

⁷⁶ "U.S. Military Returns to Ex-Soviet Uzbekistan," *Agence France Presse*, March 6, 2008; "Only Germany Can Use Uzbek Bases Now," *United Press International*, December 13, 2005.

the government in respecting human rights. President Karimov reportedly told Boucher that he was “pleased” about “positive changes in bilateral relations.”

The Manas Airbase

The Manas airbase became operational in December 2001 and uses some facilities of the international airport near Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan. According to a fact sheet prepared by the 376th Air Expeditionary Wing of the U.S. Air Force, the Manas airbase serves as the “premier air mobility hub” for operations in Afghanistan. Missions include support for personnel and cargo transiting in and out of the theater, aerial refueling, airlift and airdrop, and medical evacuation. The fact sheet reports that 170,000 troops transited through the base to Afghanistan in 2008, as well as 5,000 tons of cargo, and that KC-135 Stratotankers had refueled over 11,400 aircraft over Afghanistan. About 1,000 military personnel from the United States, France, and Spain are stationed at the base. They are assisted by 650 contract personnel, of which the majority are Kyrgyz citizens. The base contributed \$64 million to the local economy in FY2008, which included \$17.4 million in rent for use of the base, \$22.5 million for airport operations and land lease fees, nearly \$500 thousand for upgrading Kyrgyz Air Navigation operations, and about \$24 million for local contracts and humanitarian aid.⁷⁷

In early 2006, Kyrgyz President Bakiyev reportedly requested that lease payments for use of the Manas airbase be increased to more than \$200 million per year but at the same time re-affirmed Russia’s free use of its nearby base.⁷⁸ By mid-July 2006, however, the United States and Kyrgyzstan announced that they had reached a settlement for the continued U.S. use of the airbase. Although not specifically mentioning U.S. basing payments, it was announced that the United States would provide \$150 million in “total assistance and compensation over the next year,” subject to congressional approval. Kyrgyz Security Council Secretary Miroslav Niyazov and then-Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense James MacDougall also signed a Protocol of Intentions affirming that the United States would compensate the Kyrgyz government and businesses for goods, services, and support of coalition operations.

In September 2007, a U.S. military officer stated that the Manas airbase was moving toward “a sustainment posture,” with the replacement of most tents and the building of aircraft maintenance, medical, and other facilities.⁷⁹ National defense authorizations for FY2008 and FY2009 legislated construction funding for the Manas airbase, including for building a parking area for heavy cargo aircraft.

At her confirmation hearing on January 13, 2009, then-Secretary of State designate Hillary Clinton stated that improving the security situation in Afghanistan was at the forefront of foreign policy concerns of the incoming Administration. To further this goal, Gen. David Petraeus, the Commander of the U.S. Central Command, visited Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan later in the month to negotiate alternative routes for supplies for NATO and U.S. operations in

⁷⁷ U.S. Air Force. 376th Air Expeditionary Wing. *Fact Sheet: 376th Air Expeditionary Wing, Manas Air Base, Kyrgyzstan*, February 2009, at <http://preview.afnews.af.mil/manas/library/factsheets/factsheet.asp?id=12682>

⁷⁸ For background, see CRS Report RS22295, *Uzbekistan’s Closure of the Airbase at Karshi-Khanabad: Context and Implications*, by Jim Nichol. Perhaps indicating Kyrgyz pressure on Russia to compensate for use of the base, Russia in October 2006 pledged grant military assistance to Kyrgyzstan.

⁷⁹ Lt. Col. Michael Borgert, “Liberandos: Thank You for a Job Well Done,” 376th Expeditionary Services Squadron Public Affairs, September 9, 2007.

Afghanistan (supply routes through Pakistan frequently have been attacked). The establishment of such transport routes became more pressing following Kyrgyzstan's announcement that it intended to close the Manas airbase (see below). In testimony to Congress in March 2009, Gen. Petraeus reported that CENTCOM, with the support of the U.S. Transportation Command (TRANSCOM), had "established a Northern Distribution Network through several Central Asian States to help reduce costs of transporting non-military supplies to support NATO, U.S., and Afghan security operations, while decreasing our exposure to risks associated with our supply lines running through Pakistan."⁸⁰ During discussions in Tajikistan about approving such transit privileges, presidential advisor Suhrob Sharipov urged approval, because "the Americans are ... placing themselves in the line of fire. Thanks to that, we have an opportunity to develop our country.... And if the Americans pull out, God forbid, no one else would take their place there, neither Russia nor China."⁸¹ To encourage a positive response, the U.S. Embassy in Kazakhstan announced in late January 2009 that the United States hoped to purchase many non-military goods locally to transport to the troops in Afghanistan. The U.S. Embassy in Uzbekistan also reportedly discussed such purchases with local officials. A first rail shipment of non-lethal supplies entered Afghanistan in late March 2009 after transiting Russia, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan.⁸²

On February 3, 2009, President Bakiyev announced during a visit to Moscow that he intended to close the Manas airbase. Many observers speculated that the decision was spurred by Russia, which offered Bakiyev a \$300 million loan for economic development and a \$150 million grant for budget stabilization in the wake of the world economic downturn. Russia also stated that it would write off most of a \$180 million debt. The Kyrgyz legislature overwhelmingly approved a bill to close the airbase on February 19, 2009, and the bill was signed into law the next day. The United States immediately was notified that under the terms of the status of forces agreement it had 180 days to vacate the airbase. Some observers have argued that the August 2008 Russia-Georgia conflict had some bearing on the airbase closure, because regional leaders viewed the conflict as illustrating the insignificance of the U.S. presence in the face of Russian aggression.⁸³

Weapons of Mass Destruction

Major U.S. security interests have included elimination of nuclear weapons remaining in Kazakhstan after the breakup of the Soviet Union and other efforts to control nuclear proliferation in Central Asia. The United States has tendered aid aimed at bolstering their export and physical controls over nuclear technology and materials, in part because of concerns that Iran is targeting these countries.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ U.S. Senate. Committee on Armed Services. Hearing on U.S. Policy on Afghanistan and Pakistan. *Statement of David H. Petraeus Commander U.S. Central Command*, April 1, 2009.

⁸¹ "New Supply Routes For US Troops In Afghanistan," *WPS Russian Media Monitoring Agency*, January 23, 2009.

⁸² *ITAR-TASS*, February 10, 2009; *CEDR*, April 16, 2009, Doc. No. CEP-950025.

⁸³ Martha Olcott, "A New Direction for U.S. Policy in the Caspian Region," *Policy Brief*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, February 2009.

⁸⁴ A Treaty on the Central Asian Nuclear Weapons Free Zone entered into force in January 2009. All five Central Asian states are signatories. The Treaty prohibits the development, manufacture, stockpiling, acquisition, or possession of nuclear explosive devices within the zone. See CRS Report RL31559, *Proliferation Control Regimes: Background and Status*, coordinated by Mary Beth Nikitin.

After the Soviet breakup, Kazakhstan was on paper a major nuclear weapons power (in reality Russia controlled these weapons). In December 1993, the United States and Kazakhstan signed a Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) umbrella agreement for the “safe and secure” dismantling of 104 SS-18s, the destruction of silos, and related purposes. All bombers and their air-launched cruise missiles were removed by late February 1994 (except seven bombers destroyed with U.S. aid in 1998). The SS-18s were eliminated by late 1994. On April 21, 1995, the last of about 1,040 nuclear warheads had been removed from SS-18 missiles and transferred to Russia, and Kazakhstan announced that it was nuclear weapons-free. The United States reported that 147 silos had been destroyed by September 1999. A U.S.-Kazakh Nuclear Risk Reduction Center in Almaty was set up to facilitate verification and compliance with arms control agreements to prevent the proliferation of WMD.

Besides the Kazakh nuclear weapons, there are active research reactors, uranium mines, milling facilities, and dozens of radioactive tailing and waste dumps in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. Many of these reportedly remain inadequately protected against theft. Kazakhstan is reported to possess one-fourth of the world’s uranium reserves, and Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have been among the world’s top producers of low enriched uranium. Kazakhstan had a fast breeder reactor at Aktau that was the world’s only nuclear desalinization facility. In 1997 and 1999, U.S.-Kazakh accords were signed on decommissioning the Aktau reactor. Shut down in 1999, it had nearly 300 metric tons of uranium (some highly enriched) and plutonium (some weapons-grade) spent fuel in storage pools. CTR aid has been used to safeguard the 300 metric tons of spent fuel.

CTR aid was used to facilitate transporting 600 kg of weapons-grade uranium from Kazakhstan to the United States in 1994, 2,900 kg of up to 26% enriched nuclear fuel from Aktau to Kazakhstan’s Ulba facility in 2001 (which Ulba converted into less-enriched fuel), eleven kg of uranium in fuel rods from Uzbekistan to Russia in 2004, and 63 kg of uranium from Uzbekistan to Russia in April 2006.

Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan hosted major chemical and biological warfare (CBW) facilities during the Soviet era. CTR and Energy Department (DOE) funds have been used in Kazakhstan to dismantle a former anthrax production facility in Stepnogorsk, to remove some strains to the United States, to secure two other BW sites, and to retrain scientists. CTR funding was used to dismantle Uzbekistan’s Nukus chemical weapons research facility. CTR aid also was used to eliminate active anthrax spores at a former CBW test site on an island in the Aral Sea. These latter two projects were completed in 2002. Other CTR aid helps keep former Uzbek CBW scientists employed in peaceful research. Uzbekistan has continued to cooperate with DOD and DOE—even after it restricted other ties with the United States in 2005—to receive portal and hand-held radiation monitoring equipment and training.

Trade and Investment

Successive U.S. administrations have endorsed free market reforms in Central Asia, since these directly serve U.S. national interests by opening new markets for U.S. goods and services and sources of energy and minerals. U.S. private investment committed to Central Asia has greatly exceeded that provided to Russia or most other Eurasian states except Azerbaijan. U.S. trade agreements have been signed and entered into force with all the Central Asian states, but bilateral investment treaties are in force only with Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. In line with Kyrgyzstan’s accession to the World Trade Organization, the United States established permanent normal trade

relations with Kyrgyzstan by law in June 2000, so that “Jackson-Vanik” trade provisions no longer apply that call for presidential reports and waivers concerning freedom of emigration.

In June 2004, The U.S. Trade Representative signed a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) with ambassadors of the regional states to establish a U.S.-Central Asia Council on Trade and Investment. The Council has met yearly to address intellectual property, labor, environmental protection, and other issues that impede trade and private investment flows between the United States and Central Asia. The former Bush Administration at the annual meetings also called for greater intra-regional cooperation on trade and encouraged the development of regional trade and transport ties with Afghanistan and South Asia. As stated by then-Secretary Rice, these efforts supported a “new Silk Road, a great corridor of reform” extending from Europe southward to Afghanistan and the Indian Ocean. According to Deputy Assistant Secretary Feigenbaum, “we are ... promoting options and opportunities omnidirectionally but increasingly to the south—the least developed direction.” The reorganization of the State Department in 2006 to create the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs facilitated this emphasis.⁸⁵ At the fourth annual meeting of the Council on Trade and Investment in mid-June 2008 in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, then-Acting Assistant U.S. Trade Representative Mark Mowrey discussed simplifying regional import and export procedures and improving the regional investment climate.⁸⁶

All the states of the region possess large-scale resources that could contribute to the region becoming a “new silk road” of trade and commerce. The Kazakh and Turkmen economies are mostly geared to energy exports but need added foreign investment for production and transport. Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan are major cotton producers, a legacy of central economic planning during the Soviet period. Uzbekistan’s cotton and gold production rank among the highest in the world and much is exported. It has moderate gas reserves but needs investment to upgrade infrastructure. Kyrgyzstan has major gold mines and strategic mineral reserves, is a major wool producer, and could benefit from tourism. Tajikistan has one of the world’s largest aluminum processing plants. According to the IMF, the Central Asian countries exported \$37.9 billion in goods and services in 2006 and imported \$37.7 billion. Major export partners included Russia, China, Turkey, and Italy. Major import partners included Russia, China, Turkey, and Germany.⁸⁷

Despite the region’s development potential, the challenges of corruption, inadequate transport infrastructure, punitive tariffs, border tensions, and uncertain respect for contracts discourage major foreign investment (except for some investment in the energy sector). Examples of such challenges include Uzbekistan’s restrictions on land transit, which have encouraged Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan to explore building a major road to Kazakhstan that bypasses Uzbekistan. Cotton-growing has contributed to environmental pollution and water shortages, leading some observers to argue that cotton-growing is not suited to the largely arid region.

⁸⁵ *Remarks at Eurasian National University*, October 13, 2005; and U.S. Congress. House International Relations Committee. Subcommittee on the Middle East and Central Asia. *Testimony by Steven R. Mann, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary*, July 25, 2006. See also U.S. Embassy Kazakhstan. *Kazakhstan and the United States in a Changed World*, August 23, 2006.

⁸⁶ U.S. Fed News, June 18, 2008; BBC Monitoring International Reports, June 20, 2008.

⁸⁷ IMF. Direction of Trade Statistics, September 2007.

Tajikistan's economy appeared to worsen in 2008-2009, harmed by rampant corruption, rising inflation, a harsh 2007-2008 winter that contributed to a food crisis that necessitated international humanitarian assistance, and the fallout of the world economic downturn. In March 2008, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) announced that it was demanding the early repayment of some loans to Tajikistan. The reserves of the Tajik National Bank had been depleted in recent years by losses in the inefficient cotton-production sector, but the bank did not report these data to the IMF. Despite this record, some international financial institution lending has continued from the World Bank and others.

At a meeting with Tajik officials in November 2008, World Bank emissaries raised concerns that the world economic downturn might severely impact Tajikistan. The World Bank warned that the country could suffer from lowered profits from cotton and other commodity exports, from possibly sharply lowered remittances from migrant workers, and lowered foreign aid and investment. The World Bank advised the Tajik government to focus on "essential health, education, and social protection services to people to ensure that a temporary shock does not result in permanent loss of human capital and social welfare of poorer households," while deferring lower priority expenditures. It also advised regulatory and rule of law reforms to encourage entrepreneurial activity and diversification and modernization of the inefficient agricultural sector.⁸⁸ In April 2009, the Tajik finance minister reported that worker remittances had declined 25% during the first three months of the year, compared to a year ago.⁸⁹

Other regional states also reported economic setbacks as a result of the world economic downturn. Kazakhstan announced that it was withdrawing \$10 billion from its sovereign wealth fund for welfare and other needs and was setting up a Toxic Assets Fund. Kyrgyz authorities reported that citizens working abroad had sent home nearly \$900 million in 2008 (an important part of the country's GDP), almost double the previous year's remittances. However, such remittances reportedly had declined in early 2009.

Energy Resources

U.S. policy goals regarding energy resources in the Central Asian and South Caucasian states have included supporting their sovereignty and ties to the West, supporting U.S. private investment, promoting Western energy security through diversified suppliers, assisting ally Turkey, and opposing the building of pipelines that transit "energy competitor" Iran or otherwise give it undue influence over the region. The encouragement of regional electricity, oil, and gas exports to South Asia and security for Caspian region pipelines and energy resources also have been recent interests. Former President Bush's 2001 *National Energy Policy* report suggested that greater oil production in the Caspian region could not only benefit regional economies, but also help mitigate possible world supply disruptions. It recommended U.S. support for building an oil pipeline from Azerbaijan to Turkey (the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan or BTC pipeline) and a gas pipeline from Azerbaijan to Turkey (The South Caucasus Pipeline or SCP), coaxing Kazakhstan to use the oil pipeline, and otherwise encouraging the regional states to provide a stable and inviting business climate for energy development.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ The World Bank. Republic of Tajikistan: Financial Crisis and Potential Implications on the Tajik Economy, November 7, 2008.

⁸⁹ CEDR, April 14, 2009, Doc. No. CEP-950154.

⁹⁰ The White House. *National Energy Policy*, May 2001. The BTC pipeline began delivering oil to Turkey's port of (continued...)

Until 2004, the Bush Administration retained a Clinton-era position, Special Advisor on Caspian Energy Diplomacy, to help further U.S. policy and counter the efforts of Russia's Viktor Kaluzhny, deputy foreign minister and Special Presidential Representative for Energy Matters in the Caspian. After abolishing this post, its responsibilities were shifted at least in part to the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs along with responsibilities of the former Special Negotiator for Nagorno-Karabakh and Eurasian Conflicts.⁹¹ Some critics juxtaposed Russia's close interest in securing Caspian energy resources to what they termed sporadic U.S. efforts.⁹²

The Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 (P.L. 110-140; signed into law on December 19, 2007) called for the appointment of a Coordinator for International Energy Affairs under the Secretary of State to help develop and coordinate U.S. energy policy. In January 2008, the State Department created the post of Coordinator of Eurasian Energy Diplomacy and named Steven Mann to the post (he had been the last Special Advisor on Caspian Energy Diplomacy before the post was abolished). At the end of March 2008, the Secretary of State designated the then-Under Secretary for Economic, Energy and Agricultural Affairs, Reuben Jeffery, as the Department's Coordinator for International Energy Affairs, and Boyden Gray was named to be the Special Envoy for Eurasian Energy issues. In testimony in April 2008, Assistant Secretary Boucher stated that "Central Asia is clearly significant to our efforts to diversify energy supplies to Europe and the United States. We also consider the development and diversification of the Central Asian energy sector as a critical component in our broader strategy to create those multiple economic linkages that increase the independence of the Central Asian states." He reported that Bohdan Gray would assist in these diversification efforts. He claimed that the State Department had realized that there were "new opportunities" for the export of Caspian oil and gas—beyond the existing BTC and SCP—so that Mann had returned to work "full time" on Caspian energy diplomacy.⁹³ The Obama Administration has not yet filled all of these positions.

The Caspian region is emerging as a notable source of oil and gas for world markets, although many experts emphasize that regional exports will constitute only a small fraction of world supplies. According to the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), the region's proven natural gas reserves are estimated at 232 trillion cubic feet (tcf), comparable to Saudi Arabia.⁹⁴ The region's proven oil reserves are estimated to be between 17-49 billion barrels, comparable to Qatar on the low end and Libya on the high end. Kazakhstan possesses the region's largest proven oil reserves at 9-40 billion barrels, according to DOE, and also possesses 100tcf of natural gas. Kazakhstan's oil exports currently are about 1.2 million barrels per day (bpd).⁹⁵ Some U.S. energy firms and other private foreign investors have become discouraged in recent months by harsher Kazakh

(...continued)

Ceyhan in mid-2006. The South Caucasus Pipeline was completed in early 2007.

⁹¹ In 2004, the Department of State's Inspector General recommended that the post of Special Advisor on Caspian Energy Diplomacy might "now be phased out, with residual responsibilities folded into other units," because the purpose for which it was created was achieved. Office of the Inspector General. Semiannual Report to the Congress, October 1, 2003 to March 31, 2004. The Special Advisor's duties included "realizing the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline, in the launch of the Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC) line, and a range of other Eurasian energy issues." Office of the Spokesman. *Press Release*, April 16, 2004.

⁹² Eurasia Daily Monitor, May 31, 2007.

⁹³ House Committee on Foreign Affairs. Subcommittee on Asia, the Pacific, and the Global Environment. Hearing on Central Asia. *Testimony by Assistant Secretary Richard Boucher*, April 8, 2008.

⁹⁴ Including the countries of Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Russia, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

⁹⁵ U.S. Department of Energy. Energy Information Administration. *Kazakhstan Country Analysis Brief*, February 2008.

government terms, taxes, and fines that some allege reflect corruption within the ruling elite.⁹⁶ Turkmenistan possesses about 100tcf and Uzbekistan about 65tcf of proven gas reserves, according to DOE.⁹⁷

Especially since Russia's temporary cutoff of gas to Ukraine in January 2006 (and again in January 2009) highlighted European vulnerability, the United States has supported EU efforts to reduce its overall reliance on Russian oil and gas by increasing the number of possible alternative suppliers. Part of this policy has involved encouraging Central Asian countries to transport their energy exports to Europe through pipelines that cross the Caspian Sea, thereby bypassing Russian (and Iranian) territory, although these amounts are expected at most to satisfy only a tiny fraction of EU needs.⁹⁸

The Central Asian states have been pressured by Russia to yield large portions of their energy wealth to Russia, in part because Russia controls most existing export pipelines.⁹⁹ Russia attempted to strengthen this control over export routes for Central Asian energy in May 2007 when visiting former President Putin reached agreement in Kazakhstan on supplying more Kazakh oil to Russia. Putin also reached agreement with the presidents of Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan on the construction of a new pipeline to transport Turkmen and Kazakh gas to Russia. The first agreement appeared to compete with U.S. and Turkish efforts to foster more oil exports through the BTC. The latter agreement appeared to compete with U.S. and EU efforts to foster building a trans-Caspian gas pipeline to link to the SCP to Turkey. The latter also appeared to compete with U.S. and EU efforts to foster building a pipeline from Turkey through Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, and Hungary to Austria (the so-called Nabucco pipeline). Seeming to indicate a direct challenge to these plans by Russia and the West, China signed an agreement in August 2007 with Kazakhstan on completing the last section of an oil pipeline from the Caspian seacoast to China, and signed an agreement with Turkmenistan on building a gas pipeline to China (see also below).¹⁰⁰

On March 11, 2008, the heads of the national gas companies of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan announced that their countries would raise the gas export price to the European level in 2009. They signed a memorandum of understanding on the price with Russia's Gazprom

⁹⁶ A perhaps troubling case concerns Kazakhstan's August 2007 suspension of the activities of the international consortium developing the Kashagan offshore oilfield. Kazakhstan and the consortium of companies developing Kashagan reached an agreement that permitted Kazakhstan to pay a below market price to increase its share to about 17% (making it the largest shareholder) and levied several billion dollars in fines against the consortium for delays. The shares of U.S. firms ExxonMobil and ConocoPhillips were among those reduced. *Economist Intelligence Unit*, January 21, 2008. In July 2008, ExxonMobil CEO Rex Tillerson stated that the Kazakh government should stop interfering in the project. *International Oil Daily*, July 2, 2008. In October 2008, a new management system for the project was worked out. Production is planned to begin in late 2012 and to initially reach 300,000 bpd. "New Kashagan Deal Signed," *International Petroleum Finance*, November 10, 2008. In April 2009, Kazakh police announced that Eni and the U.S. firm Parker Drilling were being investigated for tax evasion.

⁹⁷ U.S. Department of Energy. Energy Information Administration. *Central Asia Country Analysis Brief*, February 2008.

⁹⁸ For details, see CRS Report RL33636, *The European Union's Energy Security Challenges*, by Paul Belkin. See also International Crisis Group. *Central Asia's Energy Risks*, May 24, 2007.

⁹⁹ According to a plan published by Russia's Institute of Energy Strategy covering the period 2007-2030, "Russian control over a large share of Central Asian gas needs to be maintained." See Minpromenergo (Ministry of Industry and Energy), Institut energeticheskoi strategii, *Kontseptsiya energeticheskoi strategii Rossii na period do 2030g.*, 2007. As reported by Philip Hanson, "How Sustainable Is Russia's Energy Power?" *Russian Analytical Digest*, No. 38 (2008).

¹⁰⁰ An oil and gas conference involving Kazakh, Chinese, and Russian energy ministries and firms has met annually since 2004 to "exchange views" on possible regional cooperation. *ITAR-TASS*, December 5, 2007.

state-controlled gas firm, which controls most export pipelines. According to analyst Martha Olcott, “the increased bargaining power of the Central Asian states owes more to the entry of China into the market than to the opening of [the BTC pipeline and the SCP]. Russia’s offer to pay higher purchase prices for Central Asian gas in 2008 and 2009 came only after China signed a long-term purchase agreement for Turkmen gas at a base price that was higher than what Moscow was offering.”¹⁰¹

Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Iran export electricity to Afghanistan. Major foci of the U.S. Trade and Development Agency’s (TDA’s) Central Asian Infrastructure Integration Initiative and USAID’s Regional Energy Market Assistance Program include encouraging energy, transportation, and communications projects, including the development of electrical power infrastructure and power sharing between Central Asia, Afghanistan, and eventually Pakistan and India.¹⁰² In 2006, the TDA granted \$800,000 to support work between the U.S. energy company AES and Tajikistan to rebuild power lines that began exporting electricity to Afghanistan in 2008.¹⁰³ The Asian Development Bank (ADB) launched a Central Asia-South Asia Regional Electricity Market (CASAREM) project in 2006 and approved \$3 million for feasibility and project design studies of the potential for Pakistan to import electricity from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. As part of the CASAREM project, ADB supports a Regional Power Transmission Interconnection Project to build a 220-kilovolt twin-circuit power transmission line by 2010 from hydropower plants on the River Vakhsh in Tajikistan to the Afghan border town of Sher Khan Bandar. A Task Force on Regional Electricity Cooperation was formed by Central and South Asian countries in April 2007.

On August 4, 2008, an inter-governmental agreement was signed by Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, and Tajikistan to build a 500-kilovolt electric power transmission line from Central Asia through Afghanistan to Pakistan. The project cost is estimated to be \$935 million to be provided by the ADB, World Bank, and the Islamic Development Bank. About two-thirds of the electricity would be provided to Pakistan and one-third to Afghanistan. The power line is planned to be completed by 2013.

Analyst Diana Bayzakova has argued that the electrical energy policies of the Central Asian states are increasingly at cross-variance as each country competes for customers outside the region.¹⁰⁴ For instance, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan are in a dispute over the latter’s construction of the Rogun hydro-electric power dam on a tributary of the Amu Darya River. Uzbekistan claims that the dam will limit water flows downstream to its territory. This dispute may have contributed to a decision by Uzbekistan in December 2008 to cut off the transmission of electricity from Turkmenistan to Tajikistan. Uzbekistan also reportedly halved gas supplies to Tajikistan because of debts, increasing the energy crisis in Tajikistan. The Tajik government viewed as unfriendly a statement by Russian President Dmitry Medvedev in January 2009 that all the Central Asian states should

¹⁰¹ Martha Olcott, “A New Direction for U.S. Policy in the Caspian Region.”

¹⁰² U.S. Trade and Development Agency. *Press Release: USTDA Launches Central Asian Infrastructure Integration Initiative*, October 14, 2005; Joshua Kucera, “Washington Seeks to Steer Central Asian States Toward South Asian Allies,” *Eurasia Insight*, April 28, 2006; Joshua Kucera, “USAID Official Outlines Plan to Build Central-South Asian Electricity Links,” *Eurasia Insight*, May 4, 2006.

¹⁰³ U.S. Department of State. Remarks at Electricity Beyond Borders: A Central Asia Power Sector Forum, June 13, 2006.

¹⁰⁴ Diana Bayzakova, “Gauging Integration Of Electricity Markets In Central Asia,” *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst*, January 28, 2009.

agree before dams are built on trans-border rivers.¹⁰⁵ Tajik authorities launched severe power rationing to safeguard water levels in the Norak hydro-electric power reservoir, which supplies about one-half of the country's electricity. Electricity was supplied only a few hours in Dushanbe, the capital, and was reportedly substantially or completely cut off in other areas of the country. In mid-February 2009, Uzbekistan reportedly ended the electricity cutoff. In April 2009, Tajik authorities announced that the increase in water levels would permit the lifting of power rationing.¹⁰⁶

Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan's main oil export route has been a 930-mile pipeline—owned by the Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC), in which Russian shareholders have a controlling interest—that carries 234.56 million barrels per year of oil from Kazakhstan to Russia's Black Sea port of Novorossiysk. Lengthy Russian resistance to increasing the pumping capacity of the pipeline and demands for higher transit and other fees, along with the necessity of offloading the oil into tankers at Novorossiysk to transit the clogged Turkish Straits, spurred Kazakh President Nazarbayev to sign a treaty with visiting Azerbaijani President Aliyev in June 2006 to barge Kazakh oil across the Caspian Sea to Baku to the BTC pipeline. Kazakhstan began shipping about 70,000 bpd of oil through the BTC pipeline at the end of October 2008.

Apparently to counter this plan, then-President Putin's May 2007 agreement with Nazarbayev (see above) envisaged boosting the capacity of the CPC pipeline. Despite this Russian pledge to increase the capacity of the CPC, Kazakhstan has proceeded to upgrade its Caspian Sea port facilities and in May 2008, the Kazakh legislature ratified the 2006 treaty. Kazakhstan also barges some oil to Baku to ship by rail to Georgia's Black Sea oil terminal at Batumi, of which Kazakhstan became the sole owner in early 2008. Kazakhstan began barging oil from Batumi to the Romanian port of Constantza in late 2008 for processing at two refineries it purchased. Some Kazakh oil arriving in Baku also could be transported through small pipelines to Georgia's Black Sea port of Supsa or to Russia's Black Sea port of Novorossiysk, although in the latter case Kazakhstan might be faced with high transit charges by Russia.¹⁰⁷

In addition to these oil export routes to Europe not controlled by Russia, Kazakhstan and China have completed an oil pipeline from Atasu in central Kazakhstan to the Xinjiang region of China (a distance of about 597 miles). Kazakhstan began delivering oil through the pipeline in mid-2006. As of the end of 2008, the pipeline reportedly had delivered about 92 million barrels (well below initial capacity of 146.6 million barrels per year). At Atasu, it links to another pipeline from the town of Kumkol, also in central Kazakhstan. On Kazakhstan's Caspian Sea border, China has finished construction of an oil pipeline from the port city of Atyrau eastward to the town of Kerkiyak. The last section of the route from the Caspian Sea to China, a link between the

¹⁰⁵ Perhaps ironically, President Medvedev had agreed during his visit by Kyrgyz President Bakiyev in early February 2009 to finance the construction of the Kambar-Ata 1 hydroelectric power station, which down-stream Uzbekistan also opposes.

¹⁰⁶ Analyst Sergey Medrea points out that Uzbekistan's energy policies have helped spur Tajikistan to build the Rogun dam to supply itself with electricity, and have caused Tajikistan to release more of its water in the winter to generate electricity, leaving less for down-stream Uzbekistan in the summer. "Energy Update [for] Tajikistan: An Eye For An Eye?" *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst*, January 28, 2009.

¹⁰⁷ *ITAR-TASS*, May 29, 2008; *CEDR*, December 11, 2007, Doc. No. CEP-950096; April 26, 2008, Doc. No. CEP-950045.

towns of Kerkiyak and Kumkol, began to be built in late 2007 and is expected to be completed in 2009.

In November 2007, Russia and Kazakhstan signed an agreement permitting Russia to export 10.6 million barrels of oil per year from Atasu through the pipeline to China. According to Chinese sources, Russia had exported about 5.5 million barrels of oil through this pipeline in 2008. This is the first Russian oil to be transported by pipeline to China.

At the end of October 2008, China and Kazakhstan signed a framework agreement on constructing a gas pipeline from western Kazakhstan (near the Caspian Sea) to China that is planned initially to supply 176.6 bcf to southern Kazakhstan and 176.6 bcf to China. Plans call for pipeline construction to begin in 2010 and to be completed by 2015, but financing remains uncertain.

Turkmenistan

The late President Niyazov signed a 25-year accord with then-President Putin in 2003 on supplying Russia up to 211.9 billion cubic feet (bcf) of gas in 2004 (about 12% of production), rising up to 2.83 trillion cubic feet (tcf) in 2009-2028, perhaps then tying up most if not all of Turkmenistan's future production. Turkmenistan halted gas shipments to Russia at the end of 2004 in an attempt to get a higher gas price but settled for all-cash rather than partial barter payments. In early 2006, Turkmenistan again requested higher gas prices from Russia, because Russia's state-controlled Gazprom gas firm had raised the price it charged for customers receiving the gas that it had purchased from Turkmenistan. In November 2007, Turkmenistan requested still another price increase, and the two sides agreed on a price of \$130 per 35,314 thousand cubic feet for the first half of 2008 and \$150 for the remainder of 2008, and a price thereafter based on "market principles."

Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, and Russia signed accords in May and December 2007 on building a new gas pipeline that is planned to carry 353 bcf of Turkmen and 353 bcf of Kazakh gas to Russia. Although the Turkmen government may have had reservations about building another pipeline to Russia, in July 2008, it announced that it would soon invite bids to construct the Turkmen section of the "high priority" pipeline.

Although appearing to continue to rely mainly on pipeline export routes to or traversing Russia, Berdimuhammedow has declared that "adherence to diverse fuel export schemes will remain as a basic principle of [Turkmenistan's] economic development strategy."¹⁰⁸ In 2007, Berdimuhammedow signaled Turkmen interest in building a trans-Caspian gas pipeline. The United States has advocated building trans-Caspian oil and gas pipelines, because Central Asia could transport some of its energy through routes not controlled by Russia and Iran. The United States also has endorsed his proposal to build a gas pipeline through Afghanistan to Pakistan and India, but investment remains elusive. Some observers warn that Turkmenistan has pledged large amounts of gas to Russia, China, and other customers in coming years, although it is unclear whether production can be ramped up in a timely fashion to meet these pledges.

Seeking alternatives to pipeline routes through Russia, in December 1997 Turkmenistan opened the first pipeline from Central Asia to the outside world beyond Russia, a 125-mile gas pipeline

¹⁰⁸ CEDR, February 9, 2008, Doc. No. CEP-950154.

linkage to Iran. Turkmenistan provided 282.5 bcf of gas to Iran in 2006 and reportedly a larger amount in 2007. At the end of 2007, however, Turkmenistan suddenly suspended gas shipments, causing hardship in northern Iran. Turkmen demands for higher payments were the main reason for the cut-off. Gas shipments resumed in late April 2008 after Iran agreed to a price boost.¹⁰⁹

As another alternative to pipelines through Russia, in April 2006, Turkmenistan and China signed a framework agreement calling for Chinese investment in developing gas fields in Turkmenistan and in building a gas pipeline with a capacity of about 1.0 tcf per year through Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan to China. All three Central Asian states will send gas through this pipeline to China. Construction of the Turkmen section of the gas pipeline reportedly began in August 2007. Construction of Uzbek section started in June 2008, and construction of the Kazakh section began in July 2008. In March 2009, China raised concerns that the pipeline would not be completed by the end of 2009, but Turkmenistan gave assurances that construction was on schedule.

Perhaps a further effort to diversify export routes, Turkmenistan signed a memorandum of understanding in April 2008 with the EU to supply 353.1 bcf of gas per year starting in 2009, presumably through a trans-Caspian pipeline that might link to the SCP and to the proposed Nabucco pipeline. According to some analysts, an early trans-Caspian link could be built between offshore platforms belonging to Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan, which themselves are linked to shore. The risk of such a project appears greater in the wake of the August 2008 Russia-Georgia conflict, since the gas supplies would transit the South Caucasus region.

U.S. Aid Overview

For much of the 1990s and until September 11, 2001, the United States provided much more aid each year to Russia and Ukraine than to any Central Asian state (most such aid was funded from the FSA account in Foreign Operations Appropriations, but some derived from other program and agency budgets). Cumulative foreign aid budgeted to Central Asia for FY1992 through FY2005 amounted to \$3.8 billion, 13.6% of the amount budgeted to all the Eurasian states, reflecting the lesser priority given to these states prior to September 11.¹¹⁰ Budgeted spending for FY2002 for Central Asia, during OEF, was greatly boosted in absolute amounts (\$584 million) and as a share of total aid to Eurasia (about one-quarter of such aid). The former Bush Administration since then requested smaller amounts of aid, although the Administration continued to stress that there were important U.S. interests in the region. The former Bush Administration highlighted the phase-out of economic aid to Kazakhstan and restrictions on aid to Uzbekistan (see below) as among the reasons for declining aid requests. In April 2008, Assistant Secretary of State Boucher stated that another reason for declining U.S. aid to the region was a more constrained U.S. budgetary situation. Aid to Central Asia in recent years has been about the same or less in absolute and percentage terms than that provided to the South Caucasian region. (See **Table 1**).

¹⁰⁹ *Iran: Daily Report*, January 21, 2008, Doc. No. IAP-11017; January 24, 2008, Doc. No. IAP-950014; April 26, 2008, Doc. No. IAP-950049; and May 6, 2008, Doc. No. IAP-950052.

¹¹⁰ In comparison, the EU has reported that it has provided approximately 1.39 billion euros (\$2.13 billion at current exchange rates) in assistance to the region since 1991. Its planned aid of about \$1 billion in 2007-2013 may prove to be more than projected U.S. aid to the region. European Community. *Regional Strategy Paper for Assistance to Central Asia for the period 2007-2013*, June 2007; Council of the European Union. *Presidency Conclusions*, 11177/07, June 23, 2007, p. 12.

The Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), created in 2004 to provide U.S. aid to countries with promising development records, announced in late 2005 that Kyrgyzstan was eligible to apply for assistance as a country on the “threshold” of meeting the criteria for full-scale development aid. On March 14, 2008, the MCC signed an agreement with Kyrgyzstan to provide \$16 million over the next two years to help the country combat corruption and bolster the rule of law. According to one report, the signing of the agreement had been delayed over U.S. concerns over non-transparency of the vote count in the December 2007 Kyrgyz legislative election (see above).¹¹¹

Congressional Conditions on Kazakh and Uzbek Aid

In Congress, Omnibus Appropriations for FY2003 (P.L. 108-7) forbade FREEDOM Support Act (FSA) assistance to the government of Uzbekistan unless the Secretary of State determined and reported that it was making substantial progress in meeting commitments under the Strategic Partnership Declaration to democratize and respect human rights. The conference report (H.Rept. 108-10) also introduced language that forbade assistance to the Kazakh government unless the Secretary of State determined and reported that it significantly had improved its human rights record during the preceding six months. However, the legislation permitted the Secretary to waive the requirement on national security grounds.¹¹² The Secretary reported in May 2003, that Uzbekistan was making such progress (by late 2003, the former Bush Administration had decided that it could no longer make this claim). In July 2003, the Secretary reported that Kazakhstan was making progress. Some in Congress were critical of these findings.

Consolidated Appropriations for FY2004, including foreign operations (P.L. 108-199) and for FY2005 (P.L. 108-447), and Foreign Operations Appropriations for FY2006 (P.L. 109-102) retained these conditions, while clarifying that the prohibition on aid to Uzbekistan pertained to the *central* government and that conditions included respecting human rights, establishing a “genuine” multi-party system, and ensuring free and fair elections and freedom of expression and media. These conditions remained in place under the continuing resolution for FY2007 (P.L. 109-289, as amended) and in appropriations for FY2008 (Consolidated Appropriations; P.L. 110-161) and FY2009 (Omnibus Appropriations, Secs. 7075 [Kazakhstan] and 7076 [Uzbekistan]; P.L. 111-8).

Among recent determinations and reports:

- Then-Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte reported to Congress in February 2008 that Kazakhstan had failed to significantly improve its human rights record but that he had waived aid restrictions on national security grounds. He did not determine and report to Congress that Uzbekistan was making significant progress in respecting human rights, so aid restrictions remained in place (IMET and FMF programs were among the affected programs that did not receive funding).

¹¹¹ *ITAR-TASS*, March 18, 2008.

¹¹² The language calling for “substantial progress” in respecting human rights differs from the grounds of ineligibility for assistance under Section 498(b) of Part I of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (P.L. 87-195), which includes as grounds a presidential determination that a Soviet successor state has “engaged in a consistent pattern of gross violations of internationally recognized human rights.” The Administration has stated annually that the president has not determined that Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have engaged in “gross violations” of human rights.

- Deputy Secretary of State James Steinberg reported to Congress in February 2008 that Kazakhstan had taken steps forward, but had fallen short in meeting reform commitments agreed to at the OSCE Ministerial Council meeting in Madrid in November 2007 on media, political parties, and elections, and on the preservation of the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). A national security waiver was issued. He did not determine and report to Congress that Uzbekistan was making significant progress in respecting human rights, so aid restrictions remained in place (IMET and FMF programs were among the affected programs that did not receive funding).

Besides bilateral and regional aid, the United States contributes to international financial institutions that aid Central Asia. Recurrent policy issues regarding U.S. aid include what it should be used for, who should receive it, and whether it is effective.

**Table I. U.S. Foreign Assistance to Central Asia,
FY1992 to FY2009**

(millions of dollars)

Central Asian Country	FY1992 thru FY2005 Budgeted ^a	FY2006 Budgeted ^a	FY2007 Budgeted ^a	FY2008 Estimate ^b	FY2009 Request ^b
Kazakhstan	1,244.8	80.16	165.59	25.191	21.95
Kyrgyzstan	806.5	43.29	54.6	32.626	29.6
Tajikistan	679.7	44.84	49.21	31.914	28.58
Turkmenistan	255.4	10.44	19.84	9.149	11.5
Uzbekistan	760.9	49.30	35.21	10.19	7.94
Regional	73.2	4.83	7.59	2.976	6.6
Total	3,820.5	232.86	332.04	112.046	106.17
Percent	14	12	16	24	25

Sources: State Department, *Office of the Coordinator of U.S. Assistance to Europe and Eurasia*, information as of November 1, 2008; *Congressional Budget Justification for Foreign Operations, FY2009: South and Central Asia*.

- FSA and Agency funds. Excludes some classified coalition support funding. Includes \$19.3 million in Defense Department Section 1206 train and equip funds for Kazakhstan in FY2007.
- FSA and other Function 150 funds, including Peace Corps. Does not include Defense or Energy Department funds, funding for exchanges, or Millennium Challenge Corporation aid to Kyrgyzstan.

Figure 1. Central Asia: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan



Source: Map Resources Adapted by CRS. (08/02 M. Chin)

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